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ESSAY THE FOURTH,

CONTINUED.

SECTION XXII.

CHRISTIANITY had not been established many centuries in the West, before a claim to universal property was set on foot in favour of the faithful, that is of Christians; nor before the bishop of Rome claimed universal empire, not only over the religious, but over all civil societies. St. Austin shall vouch for what I advance here on the first head, and what I say on the second has publick notoriety for it's voucher. The saint, in a letter to Macedonius*, takes notice of a passage in the Proverbs of Solomon†, which runs to this effect in the Septuagint version. "To the faithful man "belongs a whole world of riches; to the infidel, "or unfaithful, not even a farthing‡." What sense the passage may receive, I inquire not: but this is the comment of St Austin upon it. "We "have property in that which we possess of

* Ep. 54, ed. Basil. † Prov. xvii, 6.

‡ Fidelis hominis totus mundus divitiarum est, infidelis autem nec obolus.

" right; we possess of right what we possess justly; " we possess justly what we possess well; whatever " is ill possessed therefore belongs to another; but " he possesses a thing ill, who makes an ill use of it." On this admirable foundation the good bishop establishes the right of such saints as himself, " fideles et pii quorum jure sunt omnia," to the property of the whole world. The right is in them, though the iniquity of the unrighteous possessors be tolerated. " Toleratur iniquitas male " habentium, et quædam inter eos jura consti- " tuuntur quæ appellantur civilia." This however he is willing to connive at for the sake of present expediency, instead of insisting on an immediate cession of all this wealth, or on an actual repeal of all the laws of civil government. His words are so gracious, that they deserve to be quoted. " Sed tamen etiam hic non intercedi- " mus, ut secundum mores legesque terrenas non " restituantur aliena, &c. I believe this great doctor of the church appears to you, as he does to me, a casuist fit for Venner and the tribe of the fifth monarchy: and I cannot persuade myself, that he was so inconsistent as to refuse any estates, or other donations, that were offered to the church, or to restore any that had been given, though it has been asserted, I remember not on what authority, that he did so.

Thus early, and thus violently, did a spirit of avarice possess the religious society: and we may easily conceive what a spirit of stupid bigotry and implicit resignation possessed the laity at the same time,

time, when a little bishop of Hippo durst advance such doctrines as I have quoted to such a man as Macedonius. He might be encouraged to make the claim by the practice of the first Christians: for among them, all things were in common; the rich sold their possessions, and laid the whole price at the feet of the apostles. I say the whole price, and I add, that it was strictly exacted, as we may assure ourselves from the example of Ananias and his wife Sapphira*. They might have kept their estate, or the whole price they had sold it for. But when they brought it, in imitation of the zeal of other Christians, to the apostolical chamber or treasury, it became a fraud to keep back any part of it. Less than the whole would not satisfy the church: and St Peter accuses them accordingly of fraud, and of lying to the Holy Ghost; because they had given no more than they could spare, and had owned no more than they had given. The punishment followed instantly: they were both struck dead. It appears, that great collections were made, and every church had a common purse. By these means they supported their poor: and every man who embraced christianity being sure not to want bread, the Gospel was more effectually propagated, and great numbers of the lowest rank of people were brought into the pale. Another pious use of ecclesiastical wealth was to maintain the fathers and ministers of the word. We see, by St. Paul's

* Acts. c. v.

Epistles, that they were so maintained in their several missions; and this apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, when he distinguishes himself from others, and values himself above them on many accounts, insists particularly on this, that he had preached gratis, and taken nothing from them. He had a trade, and he maintained himself by it; for which reason Erasmus calls him, as I remember, "coriarius pontifex," the leather dressing pontiff.

It was not zeal alone that brought an immense wealth to the church, even in the first centuries. An opinion, that the end of the world was near, made the rich indifferent to riches, that they were not to enjoy long, or that were not to remain long in their families. This opinion the clergy promoted: and the laity was so silly as not to see, that if it was not worth their while to keep their estates, it was not worth the while of churchmen to be so solicitous to acquire them. The end of the world seemed to be fixed at the distance of about two hundred years, in the beginning of the fourth century, according to Lactantius*, who wrote at that time: and yet this motive had such effect, in conjunction with a multitude of other artifices employed by the religious society to the same purpose, that in this very century a law to restrain ecclesiasticks from obtaining donations and wills in their favour was become necessary. Not only

* Omnis expectatio non amplius ducentorum videtur annorum. Instit. l. 7, c. 25.

Valen-

Valentinian and Gratian, but even Theodosius, made edicts for this purpose: and the practice of inveigling weak people, devout women particularly, to defraud their right heirs, and to give their estates to the church, was so publick, so frequent, and so infamous, that the church, who had permission to hold these estates, thought it prudent to submit to some appearance of restraint in acquiring them. I say appearance of restraint, because we may conclude, that means were found of evading this very restraint, from the experience of our own age; and because it is fair to conclude, that none were neglected of heaping up wealth in those ages, when bishops themselves were the greatest usurers. This wealth was such, that it proved a principal cause of the persecutions of the church, as father Paul observes*, from the reign of Commodus: and we know that Decius, who was a great and a good prince, as princes went in those days, and as they go in ours, attempted nothing more at first, than many christian princes have executed. He attempted to seize the treasure of the church at Rome. Lawrence, a deacon of that church, broke his measures. He put Lawrence to death, and the seventh persecution began on that occasion; for which his memory has been persecuted by christian writers; as that of Charles Martel has been by the monks, who sent him to Hell for taking some of the wealth of the church, to defend

* Hist. of Benef.

both the church and the state against the Saracens.

Abundance of matter offers itself to us on this head. But the immense wealth of the clergy, their insatiable thirst after it, the usurpations and other scandalous methods by which they acquired it, and the no less scandalous use they made of it, are now so well known, that it would be loss of time to enter into any great detail on the subject. A general observation or two will be sufficient for our purpose. Bishops found pretences and means of taking to their own use the revenues that had been appropriated to the poor, the churches, and the inferior clergy, as well as to them; and left the charge of maintaining all these on the laity, who had provided for them once already. The laity were so simple as to take the charge upon them, instead of obliging these lords of the religious society to keep to the original appropriation. Hence arose the divine right of tithes, and a multitude of other exactions. But if the laity thought that their pockets were to be picked no more, they were soon undeceived. The secular clergy, living no longer in communities, gave more publick scandal, and became less fit to excite the charity of the faithful. A new clergy, therefore, arose; and monks and monasteries began about the year five hundred. The former were not all priests, indeed, at first. But the latter were retreats of men who obliged themselves to live in these convents, that, I may speak with exact propriety, a cenobitic life, under

der the conduct of the priests, and in all the supposed regularity and austerity of the first Christians. These professions and engagements struck the imaginations, and roused the zeal of the faithful; and convents were endowed with as much profusion as if nothing had been yet done for the church. These orders degenerated apace; and as fast as they did so, new orders were founded, and endowed, under the same pretence. Nothing was taken from those who had forfeited the conditions of the grants made to them, and much was given to those who took new engagements, and kept them as ill. Thus ecclesiastical policy contrived to enrich the church, even by the corruption of the clergy, and to carry these abuses forward, in a uniform gradation, and with an equal pace.

The claim St. Austin made to the riches of the whole world, as belonging of right to the elect, had not been made, I suppose, before his time; though Irenæus had justified the robbery of the Egyptians by the Israelites, on principles much the same. This claim too was neither publickly asserted by himself, nor by his contemporaries, nor by his successors, nor at any time by the church in form; the reason of which was, no doubt, that they saw how needless and imprudent it would be to give such an alarm to all mankind, when they might go on to plunder particular countries and families without resistance, though sometimes against law, and always with very great effect. This the religious society did, before

before it had any pretence of alliance with the civil, or any establishment in the Roman empire; and it is astonishing to consider, though we meet with the examples and proofs almost in every page of history, ecclesiastical and civil, how an order of men, instituted to teach a religion of so much purity, sanctity, and detachment from all worldly interests, could convert this very institution into a sordid trade, and make other men believe, that the best of good works was to enrich this order, and the greatest of sins to take any thing from it. This continued to be the case, however, near fifteen centuries, without any considerable interruption. During so long a course of time, the principles of the Gospel were so forgotten, and so perverted, that salvation was a merchandise bought and sold in every ecclesiastical shop; in that of Rome above all. This shop had so much custom, that a pope of the fourteenth century, John the twenty-second, the inventor of annates and many other exactions, left behind him, by Villani's account, which father Paul quotes in the History of Benefices, eighteen millions in specie, and seven millions in plate and ingots. An immense sum in any age, especially in that, when the West Indies had not been yet discovered.

The abuse grew to be most exorbitant in the devout ages of the church; that is, in the ages of greatest ignorance and superstition; for then the clergy had persuaded men, and the more corrupt they were, the more easily were they persuaded

suaded, that all sorts of crimes might be committed safely by those who submitted to the slight penances and pecuniary mulcts, which the church imposed, either arbitrarily, or according to a book of rates. When I say, that crimes might be committed safely on these terms, I mean safely from divine vengeance; for the man whom the church pretended to screen from this, would have been condemned at any human tribunal, and was so, I doubt not, often, to the gallows and the rack. Thus the great sanction of revealed religion was taken away by artificial theology and ecclesiastical fraud; and a great part of the objections that infidels urge against it receive a colour from the doctrine and practice of that religious society, whose independency and divine institution are pleaded for so strenuously.

The religious society was so far from being, by any right, independent on the civil, or from treating with it in form, and being incorporated with it on specific terms of alliance, when christianity became, in a fortunate conjuncture, the established religion of the empire, that this society grew into power, and into riches, as it has been said already, by degrees, by indulgence and concessions on one hand, by art and management on the other. Claims precede acquisitions in the natural and ordinary course of things. But in this case acquisitions preceded claims. The church, indeed, made a claim to power when she was first established; but it was to spiritual power. Nothing else was avowed; nothing else was suspected.

The

The civil society did not see, that spiritual power was power over opinion, and that this was power over conscience, or seeing it, did not enough consider how this power might extend and increase, how it might rival and subdue their own. But as soon as the church had drawn a great part of the affairs of civil government into her own tribunal, under the notion of spirituals, or of things appertaining to spirituals; as soon as she had acquired a prescriptive right of employing the civil power in spiritual quarrels, and the spiritual power in civil, she claimed a sovereign and universal authority, seized the two swords into her hands, and sharpened the edge of both.

SECT. XXIII.

THE good effects of maintaining, and the bad effects of neglecting religion, had been extremely visible, in the whole course of the Roman government. Numa, the second founder of Rome, contributed more to the prosperity and grandeur of that empire, than the first founder of it, Romulus, and all the warrior kings who succeeded him; for Numa established a religion, directed it, as others, both kings and consuls, did, after his example, to the support of civil government, and made it the principle of all the glorious expectations that were raised in the minds of that people. This religion was very absurd, and yet by keeping up an awe of superior powers, and the belief of a Providence, that ordered the course

course of events, it produced all the marvellous effects which Machiavel, and writers more able to judge of them and of their causes than he was, Polybius, Cicero, Plutarch, and others, ascribe to it. The inward peace of that government was often broke by seditions: Rome was in distress at home while she triumphed abroad, and at last the dissolution of the commonwealth followed a long and bloody series of civil war. But the neglect of religion, not religion, was a principal cause of these evils. Religion decayed; and the state decayed with her. She might have preserved it; but even in her decay, she gave it no wounds, nor festered like a poison in any.

This example, many others, and the reason of things, were sufficient to make such a man as Constantine see the necessity of reviving and reforming the ancient religion of Rome, or of establishing a new one; in short, of taking in the assistance of some religion or other, to pursue more effectually the great designs of his ambition. His rivals in the empire were pagans; and paganism did more than begin to be no longer a proper bond of society. The superstitious opinions and practices of it were as much in vogue in his time, as they had been in the best ages of Rome; but they were not directed, as they had been in those ages, to the support of civil government. The virtue of old Rome, and the spirit of her religion, fainted, when her liberty expired: and they were wholly extinguished in the time of Constantine, by a long course of tyrannical dominion, seldom interrupted; by the venality of the senate

now

now and long before inured to slavery, by the ferocity of the armies, by the licentiousness of the provinces, and by that independency on the authority, as well as disregard to the majesty of the empire, which prevailed in both.

On the other hand, christianity, born, if I may say so, in a desert, and educated in a little province of the empire, had spread through the whole in the course of three centuries. The progress of it was not so immense, perhaps, as Tertullian represents it in his hyperbolical style. But it was great, and Christians, under one denomination or another, were numerous in every part of the East and West. Paganism was worn out in one sense, in theory, if not in practice; the impostures of it were detected; the absurd doctrines and rites were exposed to ridicule. The priests could not defend it, and the philosophers explained it away. It lay exposed, like an unfortified country, and as the empire did soon afterward, to every incursion. Christianity was fresh and vigorous. The apparent sanctity of those who professed this religion, the courage of those who died for it, and the zeal of those philosophers and rhetors who were converted to it and writ for it, were more than sufficient to defeat the calumny raised against it. They were more than sufficient, I mean, to defeat it among all such, as finding it to be calumny in some instances, looked no farther, but deemed it to be the same in all. Among others, and in general, the very name of Christian continued to be odious long. A spirit of enthusiasm prompted many on

one

one side to revile and disturb the rites of an established religion, to provoke the heathen, to rejoice in sufferings, and to court martyrdom. A spirit of party, inflamed by resentment, transported the other side to exercise the greatest cruelties, by sudden popular emotions, as well as by regular authorised persecutions. But as soon as the christian faith and worship, by being tolerated first, and legally established soon afterward, became better known, the grossest calumnies, that had been propagated against them, began to die away even among the vulgar. These calumnies had been such as could not bear examination; more gross, if that were possible, than any of those which Christians have propagated against the Heathens, the Jews, the Mahometans, or even against one another in their several sects. One may easily conceive, that the detection of these turned to the advantage of christianity, and that patience under this kind of persecution, as well as fortitude and perseverance under another, did honour to the professors of this religion, and prepared the way to the establishment of it.

There is another circumstance of the same tendency, which deserves to be mentioned. While the Christians were confounded with the Jews, or passed for a sect of that religion, they shared the hatred and contempt which that nation had contracted. But they distinguished themselves soon, in a manner that took off all prejudice of this kind from them, and showed the wisdom and policy of St. Paul's conduct, in declaring himself the

apostle

apostle of the Gentiles, to whom the kingdom of Christ was opened, and who were heirs of the promises as well as the Jews. On this popular principle christianity was propagated: and one of the first edicts that Constantine published, in favour of christianity, was a very severe one against Jews, who should insult Christians, and Christians who should turn to Judaism. The Jews were no longer a chosen people: their nation was rejected; and all the nations of the earth were invited to partake of the same privileges, the same graces, and the same salvation. Thus the christian religion was made the religion of mankind, by the first principles of it, even while it was a sect: and therefore Constantine might think very reasonably, that to embrace and establish it would be an effectual means of uniting mankind under his government. He might think this establishment the more easy to be made by his authority, because the mysteries of Christianity were more sublime and more refined, and therefore more proper objects of veneration, than those of paganism; though many of them had been borrowed from it; and because the external worship of the new religion might be rendered, if that should be thought necessary, as pompous, and as fit to draw the attention of the people, as that of the old, by adopting some of the ceremonies and usages of the old; which adoption the christian church had already begun to put in practice.

All this was done: and no man, who considers what influence not princes only, but private men, raised

raised to the head of parties, have had in the change of religions, will think it was hard for Constantine to do it, when he had persuaded his troops, that they beat Maxentius under the ensign of the cross, and when he disputed the empire with Licinius, the declared enemy of the cross, afterward. Christianity became the established religion of the empire, and heathenism, in it's turn, a persecuted sect, banished from the cities by Constantine and his successors, and forced to hide it's head in villages and hamlets. While Gentilism, or the religion of nations, was the established religion, Christianity maintained itself in most of the cities of the empire. But as soon as this religion had taken possession of the court and the cities, the other became so generally that of peasants only, that the appellation of paganism did, probably enough, take it's rise from thence.

This great revolution was effected in part by the circumstances I have mentioned, and by others that favoured the growth of Christianity. The imperial authority did the rest, but did it ill, so ill, that the chief of those political views, which Constantine had in making this establishment, were defeated by it; and the admission of a religious society into the state, in the manner in which he admitted it, was the cause of all the ecclesiastical and theological evils that have followed from his time to ours, and that are so falsely imputed to religion itself. We may be assured, that the society cooperated with the court to bring about a revo-

revolution so much to their advantage, and thought themselves happy enough to be dependent, not independent, on the emperor; his instruments, not his allies; whatever appearances he might give or suffer them to assume in those solemn ecclesiastical farces, wherein he condescended to act, in some respects, a second part. This supposition is easily reconciled to history; and if it was less so, history would be only the more inconsistent. We should never persuade ourselves, that such a man, as it represents Constantine to have been, was a bigot as much as Helena, or reverenced priests as much as she did relicks. He was not a bigot, though the church has made him a saint; nor a bubble of ecclesiastical policy, though it seems to me that he was so of his own. But while he recalled to his mind, as he did most probably, the great service religion was of to ancient Rome, he seemed to forget, that, when that religion flourished, and was of so much service to the state, it was under the immediate inspection of the state. There was no council, but the senate, to define doctrines, nor to regulate discipline: and men were at the head of religious, because they were at the head of civil administration, instead of being at the head of the latter, because they were at the head of the former.

We cannot doubt, that the political views of Constantine, in the establishment of christianity, were to attach the subjects of the empire more firmly to himself and his successors, and the several nations that composed it, to one another, by the

the bonds of a religion common to all of them; to soften the ferocity of the armies; to reform the licentiousness of the provinces; and, by infusing a spirit of moderation and submission to government, to extinguish those principles of avarice and ambition, of injustice and violence, by which so many factions were formed, and the peace of the empire was so often and so fatally broken. Now no religion was ever so well proportioned, nor so well directed, as that of christianity seemed to be to all these purposes. It had, indeed, no tendency to inspire that love of the country, nor that zeal for the glory and grandeur of it, which glowed in the breast of every Roman citizen almost, while the commonwealth was in splendour. But it recommended, what Constantine liked better, benevolence, patience, humility, and all the softer virtues, subjection to the civil powers as to the ordinances of God, and passive obedience and nonresistance. These it recommended: and these it is said the Christians had practised, not only while they lay under the ordinary hardships imposed upon them, but under the extraordinary severity of ten persecutions, wherein ecclesiastical writers boast, how truly may be doubted, that thirty bishops of the church of Rome alone were martyrised*.

* Ecclesiastical, like all other party writers, deserve little credit when they relate facts, or draw characters, which may seem to reflect honour on those of their own side, and to render their adversaries odious. That Christians were sometimes persecuted, is a point out of dispute. But whether these persecutions

Such doctrines and such examples might well encourage Constantine to think, that nothing could

secutions were so frequent, so severe, and so unprovoked, as they stand represented, is a point very disputable. If some of the emperors, and those not of the worst, used the Christians ill; others, and those not of the best, showed them favour. Origen, who was the son of a martyr, and who aspired to be such himself, asserts[a], I think, that they, who suffered for their religion, were few. The authority is good, and the matter of fact probable. Whoever considers the temper and character of sects, of religious sects especially, and of the primitive Christians among others, will think it probable, that whenever they were punished by the heathen magistrates, they were ready to impute their punishment to their Christianity, and to complain of persecution. Their clergy were, under pretence of religion, a very lawless tribe, and paid little regard, on many occasions, to the government whose subjects they were. They usurped the part of civil judges, they assumed the power of making wills, they took possession by fraud, or violence, of the estates of others; and not content to break the laws in such instances as these, which may be called private, they broke them in the most publick manner, and instigated others to break them, by popular insurrections against the legal authority of magistrates, and by tumults, and riots, in which they insulted not only the established religion of the empire, but even their own religion, as it was practised by those who differed from them in any points of doctrine or discipline. Zeal, worked up to enthusiasm, pushed them to these excesses, and we may well believe, that they who were punished for them were decorated with the title of martyrs, and made the heroes of pious romances by the zeal of others. The list of martyrs consisted, I believe, of those who suffered for breaking the peace, and for insulting one religion, as much as those who suffered for professing quietly another, nay more: and

[a] Lib. 3. contrà Cels.

thus

could contribute more, than the establishment of christianity in the empire, to the establishment of hereditary imperial dignity in his family, and to universal peace and tranquillity. He was confirmed in this expectation, no doubt, by the professions and adulations of Sylvester, and of the whole tribe of ecclesiasticks; whether the tale of his conversion by this pope has any more truth in it, than that of his famous grant to the church of Rome or not. But in order to discern the

thus it might be immeasurably lengthened. Thus too the assertion of Origen may be reconciled easily to the opinion, that there was an innumerable army of martyrs in the primitive church. We find passages in the letters of Julian, which confirm very much what is here supposed. In that which he writes to the Alexandrians, it appears, that he did not banish Athanasius because he was a bishop, but on account of his intriguing spirit, and the disturbances he raised. Julian gives the Christians leave to choose any other bishop, who might instruct them as well as Athanasius: and adds, that if they desired to have him at Alexandria for any other reason, that was the reason for which he was banished. This emperor, on whose testimony, though he was an apostate, a reasonable man, who considered the characters of both, would rely much sooner, than he would rely on that of such a turbulent, intriguing, foul-mouthed priest as Cyril: this emperor, I say, complains loudly of the Christian flocks, for persecuting one another, and for insulting the established church, at the instigation of their pastors. When he promises, therefore, to force none to worship at his altars, and commands the heathens not to injure nor affront any of them, he commands them likewise to live in peace with the heathens and with one another, and threatens to punish them, not for their religion, but for sedition, and the violation of the civil laws.

better how these professions were kept, and what the effects have been of this ecclesiastical establishment, we must descend into some few particulars, at least, concerning it, from Constantine to Charles the Great, and from Charles the Great down to our own age. The usurpations of the religious on the civil society, the abuse of theology, and the abominable consequences of this abuse, were in part alike, and in part different; and differently carried on, with regard to power especially, in these two periods, which for that reason it is good to distinguish.

SECT. XXIV.

THESE usurpations might have been wholly prevented: and although the abuse of theology, which was grown up to a great height, could not be so, yet might the growth of it have been checked, and the tragical effects of it have been prevented, if Constantine had reduced, and his successors had kept, the clergy within proper bounds, instead of giving such a loose to avarice and ambition, to enthusiasm and contentious subtilty, as made them the plagues and scourges of the world. The emperors were sovereign pontiffs. As such, either with this title, or without it, they should have kept the whole power over ecclesiastical as well as civil affairs in their own hands; and have applied the former to preserve order and discipline, to prevent abuse and corruption in the chris-

christian, as it had been their prerogative and their duty to apply it in the heathen church. This was natural; this was reasonable. But nothing could be more unnatural, nor more unreasonable, than to divest themselves of any part of the imperial power, in favour of this order.

It seems too, that there could be no need of doing so. That the bishops gave the emperors leave to retain the title of sovereign pontiffs, is one of those idle tales which Baronius invented. But that no objection appears to have been made to it by the Christians, is true; and if there was no objection made for holding a pagan pontificate, there would have been certainly none for assuming that office in the christian church. I will not say, that the emperors might have performed pontifical functions; though I see no absurdity in the proposition, nor am able to conceive why they should not have exacted to be ordained priests and primates of the whole christian church, from the first, if that form had been thought necessary, as they have submitted to be crowned emperors, since that time, by the bishops. But this I will say, and no divine of our church will dare to contradict me, that they might have made themselves heads of the church, defenders of the faith, and, next under God and his son Jesus Christ, supreme moderators and governors in all matters, ecclesiastical and civil, without being priests. From whence should any opposition to Constantine or his successors have arisen, if he or they had thought fit to execute the functions of chris-

tian pontiffs, when the state of religion in the empire permitted them to do so; since they kept the title, wore the robe, and executed some of the powers, at least, of supreme pontiffs in the pagan church? Should it have come from the bishops? But the bishops were mean, and generally ignorant men, exercised in the lowest and least honourable professions, elected by party and faction, by intrigue and violence, and ready to comply with any mode that was prevalent, according to the character given of them nearly about this time by St. Gregory of Nazianzen. We may assure ourselves the good men would have sounded high the honour which Constantine did the church, and his zeal for our holy religion, before they had got the strength they got afterward, for want of this very precaution. Then, indeed, such an inequality of privileges and advantages was established between the clergy and the laity in many respects, and in this particularly, that the former were deemed capable of exercising all the powers, and of enjoying all the dignities and profits of civil magistracies, while the latter were excluded from all ecclesiastical power, dignity, and profit. In a word, we may believe, that this step would have been popular among the whole body of Christians, when their religion was first established. Nothing would have appeared more just, than that an emperor, by whose favour alone they became members of an established church, from being members of a sect, seldom tolerated, often persecuted, and always afflicted, should

should suffer no diminution of his imperial prerogative in this great change.

Constantine neglected to take this advantage, in the extent in which he might have asserted his right to it. He took, indeed, some airs of supremacy on certain occasions, and so did his successors. They presided in the synods they convened, they controlled the proceedings of these assemblies, and they confirmed their decrees, in matters of doctrine as well as discipline; for without this confirmation these decrees would have had little effect. By these means the emperors secured their prerogative, on which ecclesiastical synods would not have failed to encroach more than they did, or at least faster, in cases of appeals, of exemptions from secular jurisdiction, or from the common burden of taxes, and in many other cases. But the successors of Constantine, laying aside even the title of sovereign pontiffs in little more than half a century, if Gratian did lay it aside; and neither Constantine nor they having preserved a steady exercise of the pontifical power over ecclesiastical affairs and ecclesiastical persons in the christian church, the exercise of it devolved of course on the bishops. A constant exercise gave the pretence, and settled the opinion of a sole right in them, who could have none independently on the emperors, even in ordinary cases, to many extraordinary powers, while an occasional exercise of powers that belonged of right to these princes came to be looked upon in them as usurpation and sacrilege. Their chap-

lains became their masters: and one of these pretends to be so even at this time. How Constantine was the bubble of his own policy, as I have presumed to say that he was, as many great men have been, and as Charlemagne was in much the same respect four hundred years after him, may be shown, I think, on good grounds of probability, without supposing him to have been misled by a bigot respect for the church, which many of those who succeeded him were. It may be shown, I think, even by ecclesiastical history, for this, like other histories, shows very often more than it owns, even what it denies; and the sagacity of the reader gives him often a right of saying to the historian "ex ore tuo condemnaberis."

Thus it seems to me, that the great and fundamental errour from whence so many others proceeded, and which Constantine committed in the establishment of christianity, was this, which has been touched already. He admitted a clergy into the establishment, on the same foot on which this order had stood, while christianity was the religion, and these men were the heads, the directors, the governors, and magistrates of a sect, by no authority but that of the sect itself, and therefore illegally such. He admitted them, vested with this authority, which might be necessary as long as Christians made a sect apart, distinct from the other subjects of the empire, and not only out of the protection of the laws, but obnoxious to them; and which became unnecessary and dangerous when christianity had a legal establishment, and

when

when the professors of it were intirely incorporated into the empire, enjoyed the protection of the laws in common with other subjects, and more of the smiles and favours of the court. The conduct of Constantine, on this great occasion, must needs appear extremely absurd to every one who considers the consequences it had. But we may easily conceive, that the state of christianity, of paganism, and of the empire in general, as well as a multitude of particular circumstances to us unknown, might determine him, on apparent reasons of good policy, to hold it. If we seek for these reasons in the historians of that age, or in more modern ecclesiastical writers, we shall be misled or disappointed. Eusebius wrote a panegyrick, Zozymus a satire, and no relations can be more confused, no authority more precarious, than those of all the authors who have treated these subjects, and indeed every other ecclesiastical subject, from that age to this. They have been all intent to serve some particular turn: and though all men are regardless of truth in such a disposition of mind, yet are there none so regardless of it as these writers, who have rendered church history more inconsistent, and more grossly fabulous than any other history, perhaps than some romances. But still, notwithstanding the little reliance that any of them deserve, some general truths result from the concurrent tenour of their writing; two of which I shall mention, in order to account for the conduct of Constantine.

SECT. XXV.

THE first of these truths is, that this emperor neither designed to establish christianity, nor did in fact establish it with any other view, than that of making it subservient to his ambition and policy. He worked up this establishment of religion, which he preferred to paganism, for reasons already given, by slow degrees, as he found it answer his purposes, and he trimmed long between the two. The second of these truths is, that in the design of attaching the whole body of Christians to himself, he chose to do it by the medium of the clergy. The Christians were dispersed over the empire, and even beyond the bounds of it. They were of all nations and all languages. But among them all, this order of men, which we call the religious society, was established. This order was often divided; and their divisions formed different sects. But however divided they were, nay, the more they were divided, the more need they had of imperial favour. The pastors were brought by one common interest under the influence of the court; and the flocks were every where under the influence of their pastors. These two principles run through the whole conduct of Constantine, in every relation of it that is come down to us.

There is little room to doubt, that he had taken the resolution of establishing christianity when he marched, in the seventh year of his reign, from Gaul

Gaul into Italy against Maxentius. It is much more probable too, that this resolution produced the miracle of an illuminated cross in the air, with an inscription promising him victory, and which he affirmed upon oath that he had seen, as Eusebius relates, than that any such miracle produced his conversion. A story like this was sufficient to make the impression he designed. Nay, that which Zozimus relates of a monstrous flight of owls, that settled on the walls of Rome when Maxentius marched out of the city to give Constantine battle, and which this emperor seeing, drew out his troops, might have it's effect likewise. His army did not consist of Romans, attached to their ancient religion, though even by such the omen would have been well received, but of Britons, whom we believe to have been already Christians, and of the Celtic nations, to whom we may believe that all religions were indifferent enough.

But however this might be, whether Constantine came into Italy with a resolution of establishing christianity, and of leaning on that party in the empire, or whether he took the resolution when he had beat Maxentius, it is evident, that this resolution was no other than I have represented it. Licinius was not certainly a convert to christianity, and yet the first edict in favour of this religion was published in his name and by his authority, as well as in the name and by the authority of Constantine. This edict gave an intire liberty of conscience. No person was to be any longer

longer restrained from embracing christianity, but every one was set at liberty to profess the religion he liked best. This was the purport of the edict. Eusebius himself carries it no farther, and there was nothing in it which Licinius, or any other pagan prince, who thought it his interest to relax the severity of former edicts, and to keep measures of moderation with the Christians, might not grant without becoming a Christian. Many other favours, more considerable, and particular to christianity, were granted afterward. Eusebius sounds them high *: and they were great, no doubt, though they did little more than reestablish Christians in their former rights and possessions, remit unjust and cruel sentences, restore confiscations, and recal from banishment and the mines such as had been condemned to them. In all these instances, the authority of Licinius concurred with that of Constantine: and if paganism was not extirpated, christianity was in a good degree established, while they governed the empire jointly. When they quarrelled, the same political motive, that made Licinius change his conduct and persecute the Christians, made Constantine persist in showing favour to them. He raised them to the highest dignities, intrusted them with the most important commands, and increased the strength of a party in the empire which was zealously attached to him.

Notwithstanding this, he trimmed with the

* Euseb. passim in Hist. et in Vita Constant.

other,

other, and it is evident, that his zeal for christianity was at least as much political as religious. Eusebius makes him very devout and pious, and compares, in one place, his palace to a church, in which assemblies of the faithful were held. But as the flagrant crimes he committed are inconsistent with the devotion and piety ascribed to him by ecclesiastical adulation, so the whole tenour of his publick acts demonstrates, that Zozimus had some reason to say, he favoured the pagan rites in order to please the senate, though he meaned to establish christianity. Thus he permitted, even about the time that he held the Nicæan Council, and by a solemn rescript, that the aruspices should be publickly consulted; nay, he commanded it on the occasion of some reputed prodigies that had happened. Thus again, he gave countenance, at least, to several superstitious sports that were celebrated in acknowledgment of victories obtained, and to several sorts of enchantments, that were deemed effectual to procure health, and other divine favours. Many instances of the same kind may be produced, to show what measures Constantine thought himself obliged in good policy to keep with paganism, even after he had vanquished Licinius, and put him to death. But it will be sufficient that I mention one more, which was the strongest of all, and which leads to the second of these general truths, that have been observed to result from all the histories of this great revolution.

That several offices, which were not only pa-

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gan in name, but in their functions too, were possessed and executed by those who professed christianity, seems to me much more clear than the distinctions and excuses that are brought in favour of the practice. The practice was authorised by the example of Constantine, who held to the last the supreme pontificate of the pagan church. I know that some writers have ventured to deny the fact, against the evidence of history and ancient inscriptions. I know too, that much casuistry has been employed by Baronius and others, to show that christian emperors might assume the title, and wear the robe, without superstition or idolatry; for these authors are pleased to suppose that they did no more. But they contradict themselves when they excuse even this, by urging, that the authority of supreme pontiff was necessary to keep the senate and the bulk of the people, who were strongly addicted to the old religion, in subjection to the imperial authority; for how could the authority of supreme pontiff have this or any other effect, unless it was exercised? And how could it be exercised, without taking some share in the superstitious discipline signified by that mystick robe*, which Gratian is said to have refused to wear for that very reason? But if Gratian was thus scrupulous, and his successors after him, of which we may have leave to doubt, Constantine was not so; or he might wear the mystick robe of pontiff, with as little regard to the significations of it, as one of the Othos had, very probably, to those of the robe he wore, and

* Zozimus.

whereon

whereon the revelations of the Apocalypse were expressed in embroidery. The power and influence of this office had been great at all times, and therefore the emperors had kept it, like that of the tribunes, in their own hands. But this power and this influence were never greater than now, and the office of pontiff was grown more considerable than that of consul. It is very probable, that Constantine dared not divest himself of it: and I believe the best reason that can be given why he did not make himself sovereign pontiff of the Christians is this, that he found it necessary, or at least expedient, to continue high priest of the Pagans. The absurdity, however, was equally great, whether it was owing to his misfortunes or his faults. The absurdity, I mean, of presiding over a church he intended to subvert, and not presiding over that which he intended to erect.

The consequences began to appear very soon, and have continued ever since, producing, under various forms, in various ways, and with little or no interruption, a uniformity of mischief. The preeminence and dominion over conscience, which a religious society had acquired among the Christians while they were a sect in the empire, did not only continue, but were vastly extended and increased, when this religion became the established religion of the empire. They were extended and increased in the exercise, and therefore in the effect of them. No powers were taken from this order of men, not even those to which they had the least pretence, after this great change

change. On the contrary, many were added to them, and the weight of that civil authority, on which they usurped, served to enforce their usurpations. Their preeminence and their dominion over conscience had been so far from promoting charity, and maintaining unity, that they had promoted and maintained a perpetual strife and contention among Christians. If Christians suffered much by heathen persecutions, they suffered much by their own intestine divisions. They could not, indeed, make war, and massacre one another, nor disturb, in that manner, the peace of the empire. The authority of the emperors, and the strength of the Roman legions kept them in awe, and made such excesses impracticable. But their divisions were such, that the sect might have been dissolved, perhaps, while it was a sect, and the very name of christianity have been lost, if the salutary remedy of a persecution, common to them all, had not sometimes intervened to make them remember that they were all of the same religion. These disorders, however, being confined to a sect, affected the Roman state no more than ours would be affected, if any disputes should arise about inward light and spiritual gifts among the Quakers, and if those peaceable persons should fall out, call names, and excommunicate one another. But when the empire became christian, these divisions became fatal to the publick tranquillity and welfare.

Constantine had some experience of this in his own reign, towards the end of it especially. But he

he might still hope, and the submissive behaviour of the clergy towards him might encourage him to hope, that however divided they were concerning speculative points of religion, he should hold them fast to his interest by their own, and being master of the shepherds, should be master of the flocks, as it has been hinted already. He pursued this principle therefore. He added to the dignity of ecclesiastical persons, by the regard he showed them, and by the honours he affected to do them. He added to their power and authority, by the wealth, the privileges, and immunities he bestowed upon them, and by the laws he made in their favour. All this tended, in appearance and in pretence, to the support and improvement of a spiritual power alone. He meaned, that this should be distinct from the civil; that they should be independent of one another, and both dependent on him; and he did not see that this was a distinction without any real difference. He does not seem to have enough considered two things, which long experience has made manifest since, and which one would imagine he should have foreseen. He should have foreseen, that ecclesiastical magistrates would be always less dependent on the emperors than the civil, and were for that reason less fit to be trusted with power. It was obvious, that civil magistrates were the creatures of his will, whom he could make and unmake at pleasure, and not only deprive of the offices they held, but of all right to any magistracy whatever; whereas these ecclesiastical magistrates, whom he

admitted by a legal establishment into the empire, were elected independently of him into particular offices, and had a right to this sort of magistracy in general, which he could neither give nor take away. He should have foreseen, that an absolute power over private consciences was in nature, and might prove in effect, a much greater power than his own; that the church might turn against the state; from the companion become the rival, and from the rival, the tyrant of it. This happened in four centuries after his time. The constitution of the christian church, before Constantine, laid the foundations of that spiritual tyranny, which he and his successors raised; and this spiritual tyranny, established and grown into full strength before Charles the Great, laid the foundations of that temporal tyranny, which he and his father established in the bishops of Rome, the remains of which are still existent.

SECT. XXIV.

During this period, that reaches from the beginning of the fourth to the end of the eighth century, the religious society pretended directly to spiritual power alone, as it has been observed. Indirectly, indeed, they assumed a share of the other, incroached on the civil magistrates, and opposed and insulted them, whereof there were several instances at Rome and Alexandria particularly.

larly*. But in the main, they expressed great respect and submission to the emperors. Constantine abetted them in the exercise of this power, and

* No instance of this kind can be given greater than the whole conduct of Cyril, the Alexandrian bishop. This saint and father of the church was violent and cruel against all those who differed from him, even in expression; for Nestorius did little more: and yet, when he had prevailed on Theodosius, by bribing, most probably, the eunuch Scholasticus, to turn at once from favouring Nestorius to declare against him; this wretch, in concert with pope Celestinus, persecuted the poor man to death with the most persevering and inveterate malice. He showed the same kind of violence of temper in usurping on the civil power, and in supporting these usurpations by riots, insurrections, and assassinations. He took upon him, without any authority from the civil magistrate, to punish not only Jews, but such Christians as he called hereticks; to drive them out of the city, and to plunder their houses and churches, the spoils of which he abandoned to the mob, who were the instruments of his tyranny, for their greater encouragement. Orestes, the governor of Alexandria, complained of these invasions and outrages, and attempted to restrain them, as it was his duty to do. But Cyril, by exciting the common people, the most seditious that were to be found in any city of the empire, maintained, as it were, a civil war in that city, and called in another sort of mob to join with this in supporting it. He called in five hundred monks at once from their retreats in the mountains of Nitria. To one of these, named Ammonius, a fit instrument for his purpose, he gave the command of this secular and ecclesiastical mob, by whom Orestes was attacked in the streets of Alexandria. He was rescued, indeed, and his life was saved, though he had been wounded by Ammonius in the fray. The mob was dispersed, Ammonius seized and put to death, and Cyril had the impudence to declare him a martyr, and to cause him to be honoured as such.

and his successors, sometimes through bigotry, and sometimes through policy, as we may collect from the different characters of these princes, made themselves parties, on one side or other, in every ecclesiastical dispute that arose. This gave them much to do, maintained a perpetual ferment in the empire, and was almost as great an evil from within, as the inundation of barbarous nations was from without.

Let us not presume, like many divines, to account, by the short and fallible rule of human reason, for what Providence directs or suffers. But we may observe with astonishment, that a religion, revealed by God himself, taught by himself in one country, where he sealed it with his blood, as strangely as that may sound to a mere theist, and propagated through a great part of the

* It may not be amiss to mention another example of the revengeful and sanguinary character of this prelate. Hypatia was a Platonician lady, of so much wisdom, knowledge, and virtue, that she used to be consulted by the philosophers, and even the governors of Alexandria, and that Orestes was particularly attached to her. To be revenged, therefore, of Orestes, for Hypatia does not appear to have given him any provocation, this woman was attacked by another ecclesiastical bravo, whose name was Peter, at the instigation of Cyril, in the streets of Alexandria, where they stripped her naked, dragged her along, and made her suffer the most cruel outrages, till she expired.

It is not worth my while to quote any more instances of the usurpations and cruelty which the religious society exercised, whenever, and wherever, they durst. History is full of them. They were exercised at Rome sometimes, as well as at Alexandria, and wherever christianity prevailed.

world

world by persons commissioned by him, as well as assisted supernaturally by the Holy Ghost, should continue more than seventeen hundred years in a flux state. I affirm the more boldly, that it has continued in this state so long, because, though it will be said, and is said every day in the pulpit, that all the important points of christianity, and every thing made necessary to salvation, are fixed and clear, yet the assertion is evidently false, when it is applied to theological, however true it would be, if it was applied to Gospel christianity; and it may be proved to be so even out of the inconsistent mouths of those who make it. To whatever sect we addict ourselves, if we are saved, it must be on the faith of man, it cannot be on that of God; for the pure Word of God neither is nor ever has been the sole criterion of orthodoxy. Theology has done by the word, as philosophy did by the works of God, and the same abuse has been made of both. Naturalists have built immense systems of imagination on a few sensible phænomena, inaccurately observed very often, and not always very fairly recorded. Divines have done the same, on a few intelligible and unintelligible passages, picked up here and there in the Scriptures, and connected and commented as their purposes required. The first have not stopped where the phænomena have ceased; nor the other where the Scriptures have been silent, or have not spoken clearly; which ought to be reputed the same, and to check our presumption alike. On the contrary, where they have had no rule to go

by, like men freed from restraint, they have gone the greatest and the boldest lengths. This has been the case from the apostolical days to these, and to this we owe all the disputes that have puzzled religion, and all the mischief these disputes have brought on the world. This must be the case too, till divines return to the Gospel, as philosophers have returned to nature, and presume to dogmatise no farther than the plain import of it will justify, contenting themselves to leave things dark and ambiguous, which revelation has left so. How soon this will happen, I know not. Such a method is now, as it was of old, too sober for enthusiasts, the subject too barren for rhetors, and the avowal of ignorance too humble for doctors, who pretend to teach supernatural, as well as natural theology, and to assume to themselves that knowledge, which Christ intended should be common to all who are to be saved by it, as Erasmus somewhere or other observes *. But we must go back again to the primitive ages, that we may see in some few particular instances the rise and growth of human authority in matters of religion.

It was foretold, that false prophets would arise among Christians, and it was natural they should in such an age, in countries where the minds of men had been long prepared for every thing that appeared supernatural or mystick, and on the pub-

*——— ad paucos homines contrahimus rem, quâ Christus voluit nihil esse communius.

lication

lication of a religion new and marvellous. Converted Jews might think, and in fact did think, that they had a right to take their share in building up and adorning a religion, which sprung out of theirs, and whose authority rested on that of their prophecies. Converted heathens might think, and in fact did think, that they had at least as good a right of the same kind, since some of the most sublime doctrines of christianity were such as Pythagoras and Plato had taught, and since the prophecies, urged from heathen records concerning Christ, were much more clear and express than any of those that were brought from the Jewish Scriptures. But there were other circumstances, which gave more immediate temptation and pretence to the false prophets that arose in the days of the apostles, and multiplied very fast afterward, like swarms of insects from those dunghills, the cabalistical schools of Jews, and the metaphysical schools of Heathens.

The christian system of faith and practice was taught by God himself, and to assert or to imply, that the divine Logos, who was incarnated to instruct as well as to redeem mankind, revealed it incompletely or imperfectly, is not less absurd nor less impious, than to assert, or to imply, that he performed the work of our redemption incompletely or imperfectly. Christianity therefore, as the Saviour published it, was full and sufficient to all the purposes of it. Simplicity and plainness showed, that it was designed to be the religion of mankind, and manifested likewise the divinity of

it's original. But then, this very simplicity and plainness was a stumbling block to some, and a pretence to others. The theology of those ages had accustomed men to think, that nothing could be divine which was not mysterious, and that incoherent, obscure rhapsodies, which are frequently the language of ignorance or fraud, were sure characteristicks of superior knowledge in the first philosophy, or of inspiration from above. The prophets, among the Jews, had spoke in this style; the heathen oracles pronounced ænigmas; the theology of Egypt and the East was unintelligible, and the metaphysical refinements of the Greek philosophers were a mere jargon of words, supposed to signify most sublime truths, though they had no meaning at all. The Jews, therefore, who believed in the Messiah when he appeared, and the Heathens, who heard that the Divine Logos had appeared, could not fail to receive his doctrine agreeably to their prejudices and habitudes. A system of natural law, enforced by a divine mission, and a divine sanction, had nothing in it which was new to either of them; and the Heathens knew, that the title of Son of God had been given to Zoroaster and to others. But the simplicity and plainness of his doctrine might surprise them the more, for this very reason. They could scarce fail to persuade themselves, that this simplicity and plainness must be the veil of something more marvellous, and more worthy of a revelation. All was type and figure in the sacred writings of the Jews, and they were obliged to understand now of a spiritual, what they had till now understood of a tem-

temporal kingdom. All the grose conceptions of polytheism and idolatry were exploded. Heaven continued to be peopled as much as ever, but with inhabitants of another kind. In short, all the pompous rites and ceremonies of external worship were abolished at first among Christians, and God was to be adored in spirit and in truth. After such changes as these, it seems to me, that the converts to christianity could not, as they did not, fail, agreeably to their prejudices and habitudes, to embroider some of the tinsel of the religions they left on the religion they embraced, nor to make the spirituality of one as fit to create astonishment, and to maintain an attachment in the minds of men, as the carnality of the others.

This was done, the great means of doing it offered themselves. Christianity was taught first, and propagated afterward by word of mouth. So the apostles and disciples received it, and so they instructed the converts they made in their several dispersions. Nor were these the sole preachers of divine revelation. Others arose who had not been taught in the same school, nor been commissioned to teach in the same manner. Paul himself was one of these. He entered a volunteer into the apostleship. At least his extraordinary vocation was known to none but himself. He went about preaching his Gospel, as he called it, before he had any correspondence, or even acquaintance, with those who composed the church of Christ at that time; and when he came among them he took the air of a master, submitted to

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none, but controlled and reprimanded even the prince of the apostles, as you pretended catholicks affect to call St. Peter. The apostles, the disciples, and the first converts in general, were ignorant, illiterate persons. Such men, therefore, as deemed themselves more skilful in cabalistical interpretations of the Scriptures, and more knowing in Jewish and heathen theology, might assume the same rights which the apostles and disciples exercised; teach, convert, and form different congregations: or they might add to, and alter the doctrines, which the apostles and disciples taught, and thus form different sects, in the same churches, by assuming no other right than that which every member had, man and woman indiscriminately, the right of prophesying or preaching, as often as they pleased to suppose that the spirit moved them to it. The apostles opposed the false prophets that arose in their time, by epistles, by messages, and by revisiting the churches they had themselves founded, but often without effect, and always with much difficulty, as we may judge by that which Paul found to maintain his authority in the church of Corinth, and in others.

One would think that the gifts of the spirit, among which this of prophesying or preaching held a first place, should not only have supplied the want of all other knowledge, and have put to silence the most learned and eloquent, but should have established, by the influence and energy of one and the same spirit, one and the same system of faith and manners in the whole christian church.

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This would have been the case too, it must have been so necessarily, if all those who pretended to gifts of the spirit had really had them; and it has always seemed to me, that Origen answered Celsus very poorly, when, to justify or excuse the variety of opinions and sects among Christians, he urges those that abounded among the heathen philosophers. But many thought they had these gifts of the spirit, who had them not; many pretended to have, who knew they had them not; and it grew so easy to impose the belief of them on the multitude, that Simon, who had offered to buy them, might think himself well off that bargain, perhaps, and that the other hereticks who arose might not find any want of them to establish their sects. The belief that they had them was easily wrought by sham miracles, by seeming or real austerity of life, by discourses filled with false sublime about spiritual beings and metaphysical or supernatural doctrines, and by other proofs of the same equivocal sort, in an age when enthusiasm was the epidemical disease, and when one great revelation gave occasion and pretence to so many little ones. That such was the temper of the age, and such the character of those who professed christianity in it, will appear the less doubtful to us, if we call to mind the several apocalypses that were current among the primitive Christians, the Apocalypse or revelation of St. John and that of Cerinthus, for instance, if they were not the same, and if the reveries of a mad Judaising Christian have not got into the canon, under the apostle's

apostle's name: the Apocalypse of St. Peter, that of St. Paul, and that of St. Thomas, likewise, all of which are now lost, and have been so long; but the style and matter of which may be guessed at with sufficient assurance by the style and matter of that which we have in our hands. That the apostles, to whom these are ascribed, were not the authors of them may well be. But the authors of them were Christians; and if all the fathers and churches did not receive them, as all did not receive the Apocalypse admitted into our canon, yet many did, and that is sufficient for my purpose, especially when it is joined to so many other instances of enthusiasm as the first Christians gave, which cannot be denied, though the terms may be changed, and madness and phrenzy may be called divine illumination, mystical rapture, or holy zeal.

The names alone of those who held different opinions concerning the most important points of christianity, and formed different sects, would fill a very long roll; and even a summary account of their doctrines would fill a treatise much larger than I design this Essay shall be. Beside which, I am far from believing the greatest part of the absurdities, profanations, and impieties imputed to them by Irenæus, Epiphanius, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, and others, some as ancient, and some more modern. What credit and what respect soever fathers and ecclesiastical writers may deserve on other subjects; sure I am, that they deserve none, when they speak of those who differed

fered from them, and on whom, for that sufficient reason, the brand of heresy had been once fixed. The parties of such men were their judges: and we know them only by the passionate accusations which their enemies brought, and the severe sentences which they pronounced. Even the writings against the opinions that prevailed after long contests, and contests sometimes of dubious issue in the church, as well as the writings against christianity itself, were stifled in their birth, or destroyed afterward by the vigilance of the orthodox, and the zeal of emperors, who exerted their whole authority for this purpose; instances of which are to be found in the Theodosian Code, particularly. Nothing can be therefore more uncharitable, nor more unjust, for charity and justice are due to the dead as well as to the living, than to join in the common cry against the hereticks, that arose in the first and succeeding ages of the church, to do this implicitly on the most suspicious testimony, and to do it in the full extent of abominations and absurdities imputed to them by ecclesiastical writers. I shall decline this proceeding, though the custom be so established, and so sanctified in opinion, that he who declines it runs the risk of becoming an object of the same uncharitableness and injustice.

Many accusations have been brought by Christians against Christians, that carry on their front as evident marks of calumny, as any of those which the Heathen brought against the whole body of Christians, in the rage of party and the fury of persecu-

persecution. The former seem even to have been invented on the latter, and they were applied to the same cruel use wherever the orthodox had power for it. The Carpocratians, or the Montanists, or both, for both were comprehended in the general appellation of Gnosticks, lay under the imputation of drawing blood from infants, and making up the sacramental bread with it. Can we doubt, that this idle tale took it's rise from another, which the Heathens propagated against the Christians, whom they accused of sacrificing children and eating their flesh? That the celebration of nocturnal mysteries among the Christians might give occasion to some debauch, as it had done among the Pagans, we may believe. But that the promiscuous, nay incestuous use of women, was a religious institution of any sect, or that the Nicholaites prescribed this use of them on every Friday, as one of the necessary means of salvation, I believe no more, than I do the silly story, as circumstantial as it is, which Tertullian refutes, of a dog tied to a candlestick in the love-feasts of Christians, which he pulled down and extinguished, by catching at a piece of bread thrown out of his reach; after which, not only other devout persons mingled together in the dark promiscuously, but even fathers and daughters, mothers and sons, brothers and sisters, in one common incest.

These objections, and such as these, should not have been made by the orthodox, out of a regard to truth; nor should others have been insisted

ted on as much as they were, perhaps, in point of prudence. The Simonians were reputed magicians, like the founder of their sect. So were the Carpocratians, the Valentinians, and others. They pretended to charms and enchantments, to command the good, to constrain the evil spirits, and to exercise all the imaginary powers of this kind, which were believed in a superstitious age, under the notion of magick natural and theurgick. The imposition was gross, no doubt, and the practice a cheat. But if we had in our hands the apologies of these hereticks, as we have those of the orthodox, I suspect, that we should find the former ready to justify, or to excuse themselves by the example of the latter. They might quote, unjustly indeed, but plausibly at that time, the precept of St. James*, and the practice of the church as an example of both kinds of magick in one. The Apostle directs, that prayers should be said over the sick, and that they should be anointed with oil in the name of the Lord; the effect of which ceremony was to be the cure of their infirmities, and the remission of their sins. Your pretended catholick church employs it so late, that, though you believe piously that it serves for the remission of sins, you cannot discover, by experiment, whether it serves as effectually to the cure of diseases. But in the primitive church, the remedy was employed for both, and the sick took it betimes. It was a secret, might the apologists of heresy say, both of natural and theur-

* Chap. v.

gick

gick magick, and they might pretend that several such had been discovered by them, or by their illuminated masters. They might proceed farther, and quote all the pompous things that christian apologists used to advance concerning the power they pretended to exercise daily over dæmons, whom they conjured, subdued, and expelled out of the bodies of men, when all the exorcisms of the heathens had failed. The apologists of these heresies, who writ later, might urge still greater authorities to justify their pretensions. They might appeal, for instance, to the constant and universal practice of their adversaries themselves, even in that age, who admitted neither children nor persons grown up to baptism, till the impure spirits were driven from them by exorcisms, and by the holy blowings of priests upon them, which superstitious ceremony was brought gravely as a proof in the dispute with the Semipelagians about grace, and was supposed necessary to precede baptism, as baptism grace.

The truth is, that several of the superstitious notions, institutions, and customs of the Eastern and Egyptian nations creeped into christianity, round about through Judaism at first, and afterward directly. Every one took of this tinsel, as I called it above, what he liked best, or what he thought might be best adjudged to improve the christian system. This was done by Jewish converts, in the spirit of the Cabbala, which taught them,

them, under the pretence of explaining, to create mysteries where there were none; and by heathen converts, in the delirious spirit of metaphysicks, which they had caught from the Pythagorean and Platonick philosophy. It was common to all Christians. It was not confined to those who were called hereticks because they differed from those who assumed the title of orthodox. If the former assumed the pompous title of Gnostics, and despised the first preachers of christianity as ignorant and illiterate men, the latter grew Gnostics soon, without assuming the title, though Clement of Alexandria maintained, that to be a good Christian, it was necessary to be a good Gnostic. Thus ignorance and learning conspired to turn the plainest religion that ever was into a chaos of theology, from which it has never been reduced again to a uniform, consistent, and intelligible system. It seems too, that the teachers of it have never designed that it should be so reduced; for they have proceeded, in every age, as if religion was intended, says the author of Hudibras very sensibly, in his burlesque style, for nothing else but to be mended. God drew light out of darkness: men have drawn darkness out of light; and while many have pretended to be their guides, they have wandered different ways without any guide at all; for it is in this case most true, that the blind have led the blind, and they have all fallen, some into one ditch, some into another. All have pretended submission to the authority of God. All without exception, orthodox as well

as hereticks, have submitted, in truth, to the authority of man. Numberless human institutions have divided a world, that the divine might have united, and instead of universal peace, founded on universal benevolence, the natural effect of the latter, they have caused and maintained perpetual discord, hatred, wars, persecutions, and massacres. I said, that christianity became a chaos of theology, and the image is proper. It has been composed of jarring elements ever since.

——————— nulli sua forma manebat,
Obstabatque aliis aliud. ———————

These divisions and contentions were so general in the primitive church, that St. Jerom supposes them to have given occasion to the institution of bishops: and I will observe by the way, that I may make my court to your clergy and ours, that even on this hypothesis bishops may be reckoned of apostolical institution; since the reason of instituting them commenced in the days of the apostles. This reason was, according to St. Jerom*, because there would be otherwise as many schisms as priests, and because every one of these, drawing men to his private opinions, which was, I believe, the original meaning of the word heresy†, the church of Christ would be otherwise broken. Those assemblies which we call councils, had been convened for the same purpose, in imitation of that which was held at Jerusalem, and wherein the schism breaking out at Antioch, and fomented or authorised, at least, by the opposi-

* Adv. Lucif. † Ad Evag.

tion

tion of Peter and Paul, was compromised. But neither of these means proved effectual. Bishops quarrelled, disputed, intrigued, when they stood single: and when they assembled in councils, they anathematised, that is, they cursed and damned one another. Various gospels, various epistles, were current. They were all received, in some of the churches at least. What they contained, that are not come down to us, we know not. But we may well believe, that they gave occasion to diversity of opinions; since we know, that the boasted chain of tradition was not uniform in some of the most important points; and since we know, that the disputes which arose in christian congregations, of how great or how little moment soever, were pushed with the utmost violence. The dispute just mentioned could not regard essentials; for about essentials the prince of the apostles could not err, nor would have yielded to a new comer, who had never conversed with the Lord, and who could pretend to no more of the gifts and illuminations of the spirit than himself. Such again was the dispute about the celebration of Easter, in which, trifling as it was, much acrimony was shown, many synods were held, and a bishop of Rome* was on the point of excommunicating all the churches of Asia. I cite no more of this sort, which regarded chiefly discipline and outward observances, wherein there were some who affected greater evangelical purity,

* Victor.

some who asserted evangelical liberty, and some who practised a sort of spiritual licentiousness. But I proceed to observe, that other disputes arose, wherein the most essential points of christianity were supposed to consist. These were disputes about faith more than works; and though such of the disputants, as grew, by time, accident, management, or violence, to be reputed orthodox, damned those who differed from them; yet the points on which they differed were so undeterminable by revelation, and so incomprehensible to reason, that they remain, after all the mischief they have done, still undetermined for want of any criterion. Of the disputes about grace, predestination, freewill, election, reprobation, sanctification, justification, and other sublime theological doctrines, which St. Paul pretended to teach and to explain, and which it were to be wished that no man had presumed to teach after that great apostle, since they appeared obscure even to St. Peter, I shall say nothing. It will be sufficient that I say something of the opinions that were entertained, and of the disputes that arose in the primitive church, concerning the divine and spiritual natures.

Now concerning these particularly, we must observe, that they were derived much more from the heathen than the Jewish theology. As much use as the latter made of angels in their scriptures, and as fond as some writers have been to make Michael pass for a second essence in the trinity, and Gabriel for a third, it has been the opinion

opinion of learned men, that the Jews did not know, before the captivity, so much as the names they gave to these heavenly messengers after it. But to begin higher, and at the first principle of all theology. It has been shown, in one of these essays, on grounds of very great probability, that the one Supreme Being was known to the heathens, that he was acknowledged even by those among whom polytheism and idolatry prevailed, and that he was worshipped too, wherever a crowd of imaginary divinities, that superstition introduced, did not intercept this worship. It must be confessed, that this happened sooner or later in all those countries to which our traditions extend. They had ungenerated and generated, supercelestial and celestial gods, whole gods and half gods, and angels and dæmons, and genii, and spirits, and souls, in all their systems of theology. This monstrous assemblage made the object of vulgar adoration. But we know, that philosophers thought more reasonably at all times, or that their inward doctrine was less absurd than their outward, and that theism was taught more purely, and that religion was made more intellectual by those of them who refined on this gross theology, like Pythagoras and Plato, whose philosophy had spread during some centuries before christianity began, and was taught in the famous school of Alexandria, both when it began and long after. From this school there came some of the greatest advocates, and some of the greatest enemies of christianity; some of the greatest saints, and

some of the greatest hereticks. It could not happen otherwise, for many reasons, and among the rest for this. The sect of Potamo was established at this time, and the mode of choosing particular opinions in every sect, without an intire attachment to any one, was prevalent, as it has been said, I think, already. This mode had a great influence on the christian system. Many instances of it might be produced. That of Origen may stand for all. He was zealous, but learned. He applied himself to the study of the Scriptures, and took infinite pains to establish the text, and fix the sense of them: but he was imbued so strongly with cabalistical and metaphysical notions and habits, that he taught many whimsical doctrines, and gave much advantage to men every way his inferiors, to such as Jerom among the ancients, and such as Beza among the moderns.

Christians who formed their opinions concerning the Supreme Being in this school, or out of it, on the best principles of heathen theology, formed them very different from those of the Jews. They went into extremes on both sides. The Jews believed not only the monarchy of God over all being, but his unity; and were famous for their aversion to polytheism and idolatry, at least after their seventy years captivity. If they had not received this faith from their patriarchs, they might have learned it from the Egyptians. Nay, their patriarchs might learn it by their commerce with this people. I do not say that they did. But this I say, that it is more easy to show how they might, than divines have found it to give a sufficient

sufficient reason why Moses, who took so many institutions from Egypt, of much less importance and efficacy towards the good government of a rebellious and obstinate people, neglected to inculcate the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and of a future state of rewards and punishments; which other legislators, who were not more learned than he was in all the learning of the Egyptians, took from them, and employed to the best purposes. But although the conceptions, which the Jews entertained of the Supreme Being, were thus far very orthodox in the eye of reason, and although the psalmists and the prophets strained their imaginations to express the most elevated sentiments of God, of his works, and of the methods of his providence; yet this eternal, this infinite Being was represented in their histories, and in the whole system of their religion, as a *local tutelary* deity, carried about in a trunk, or residing in a temple; as an ally, who had entered into a covenant with their fathers; as a legislator, who had writ their laws with his own hand; as a king, who had actually held the reins of their government; and as an industrious magistrate, who descended into all the particulars of religious and civil administration, even into the most minute and meanest. Thus were the Jews accustomed to familiarise themselves with the Supreme Being, and to imagine that he familiarised himself with them; to think him constantly employed about them, as about the nation he had chosen for his elect and favourite people, and to figure him to

themselves receiving their sacrifices, and listening to their prayers, sometimes, at least, as grossly as Lucian represents Jupiter. This will appear in the eye of reason to be one extreme.

The other carries a greater appearance of reverence to the Supreme Being, but is little less absurd; and while the direct tendency of the former notions was to promote superstition, and to make God the object of it, the indirect tendency of those I am going to mention was to promote polytheism and idolatry. It would not be to the purpose to collect many things, which Pagan monotheists have said of the Supreme Being. Plato himself would have done well, notwithstanding the sublime expressions concerning the divine nature, which are to be found in his writings, to keep the reserve on this subject, which he professes in one of his letters; and upon the whole, the heathen and christian divines both would have done much better than they did, if they had followed more closely and more constantly the example of Simonides, who owned himself unable, after several delays, to answer the question Hiero put to him, "quid aut qualis "esset Deus." The divine nature cannot be explained by human words; for it cannot be conceived by human ideas: and therefore none but delirious metaphysicians, who employ words, that impose by their sound and have no determinate ideas affixed to them, will ever attempt this explanation. All that the wit of man can do is to speak cautiously and reverently of it, according

to

to those general notices of wisdom, and power, and majesty, and all other perfections, which we are able to collect, "à posteriori," that is, from the works of God, and which serve still more to show our ignorance than our knowledge.

Sensible of this, the heathen divines in their sober moods represented the Supreme Being as hidden from us in the depths of darkness, or in excess of light; a first selfexistent Cause of all existence; a real being but above all essence; really intelligent, but above all intelligence; and lest such notions as these should carry men not only to think very truly of the incomprehensibility of God, but to imagine, according to the grossness of their conceptions, that the Creator was too far removed from his creature, the workman from his work, and the governor from the governed, the heathens invented a chain of beings from God to man, and a more extensive system of divine natures. The Jews had brought the first and only God that they acknowledged too near to man, and had made him an actor immediately and personally, as it were, in the creation and in the government of the world. This was too absurd for heathen divines. It could never enter into the conception of such as Plato, for instance, who declared, or made the first God declare in the Timæus, that the whole animal world must have been necessarily immortal, if it had been an immediate effect of the first cause. The same men would have deemed it a profanation, as well as an absurdity; and to avoid both

both one and the other, they assumed all those inferior gods, and ministering spirits, which became the objects of so much idolatry.

The Pythagorean and Platonick schools imagined two sorts of emanations from the Supreme Being, as it has been hinted. Some of these were supposed to go out of the deity, and to be participating beings. So they were called, and this class was numberless; since it contained all the inferior and younger gods, and all the spiritual beings, from the soul of the world, which Proclus, or one of the same mad tribe, calls the elder sister, down to the soul of man, which he calls the younger sister. Other emanations, two only, were assumed to remain in the deity, and to be emanations, that do not emane, goings out, that do not go out, the Logos, or first mind; the Psyche or the first soul; one of whom was the Nous of Anaxagoras, the Demiurgus, or the maker of the world, and the other a living selfmoving principle, that gives life and motion to all that lives and moves. This was a trinity in the godhead, or this was the godhead, the "To theion," such as several of the latter Platonists, who turned dogmatists, and laid aside the name of academicians, conceived it to be. True it is, that scarce any two of the heathen Trinitarians held the same language, no nor any one of them in two different places. It was the language of men, who rambled from one arbitrary hypothesis to another; and what I am to observe particularly here is, that although they spoke sometimes of the monad,

mad, or first unity alone, as God, yet they ascribed often so much to the second god, that the first became in some sort a nonentity, an abstract or notional being, a being and no being, without essence or nature, because above them, and rather an intelligible than an intelligent principle. Thus they left, in some sort, no place to the one true God in their conceptions, while they endeavoured to raise him above all conception; and while some, like the Jews, employed him too much and in too trifling a manner in the formation and government of the world, they banished him almost intirely out of the system of his works.

I have mentioned these notions the rather, because their indirect tendency in their opposition to Judaism is to promote polytheism and idolatry, as I said above; and because, notwithstanding this tendency, they come the nearest to those that prevailed most in the christian church, to those particularly that remained unfixed during three centuries, and that required the greatest efforts of human authority to reduce them, when they were fixed, into one uniform profession. On all these accounts it is proper to speak a little more largely of them.

SECT. XXVII.

I HAVE spoken somewhere of the ditheistical doctrine. It was very ancient, no doubt, though not so universally professed as Plutarch represents

sents it to have been. Oromasdes and Arimanius were the good and the bad principle among the Persians; Osiris and Typhon among the Egyptians. Pythagoras has been suspected, not convicted, of holding this doctrine; for by this Duad, or evil principle, he might mean nothing more than matter: and Plato did only seem to lay some foundation for it, by his hypothesis concerning the original of evil. Cerdon or Marcion, or some of the Gnosticks, introduced it into christianity, and the sect who held it continued under the names of Manichæans and Paulicians from the third till the end of the ninth century. As repugnant as this doctrine is to our most clear and best determined ideas, it seemed to account for the existence of evil as well as good, and for the supposed irregular, unjust distribution of them, consistently with the belief of a Supreme Being, infinitely good. This was enough for such Arabian and Persian philosophers, as Scythianus, Terebinthus, or Manes, and indeed for most other philosophers, in ages when a little superficial plausibility was sufficient to convert any hypothesis, against the evidence of reason, into a dogma. I have recalled it in this place, because it leads me to make two observations, that will cast some light, the second especially, on the obscure and confused theology of which we are going to make mention. The tritheistical doctrine appears then to be as ancient as the ditheistical, that is, more ancient than our most ancient traditions, not only by many direct proofs, but even

even by this, that the primitive ditheists seemed to borrow from the other system, when, to improve their own, some of them altered it so far as to place a mediating principle between the good and the evil god. A strange kind of tritheism surely, or rather a system which partook of both, and was neither. We may observe in the next place, that the second god of the ditheists kept his rank but ill, and was degraded, from coequality and coeternity with the first, to be an inferior, a created, a fallen being. He was, indeed, even in this state a very powerful being; since he could transport the Son of God from the desert to the top of the temple, and afterward to that of a high mountain. That Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights, and that he was hungry, ought not to lessen our admiration of this diabolical strength; since we are not to consider it as bodily, but as spiritual strength, and this the Son of God could exert, as it appeared by his miracles, though he was in the body. The Devil, notwithstanding this circumstance, of which he could not be ignorant, confided so much in his own strength, and was so impudent, that he tempted him, that he tauntingly quoted passages of the Scripture to him, as Jesus quoted some to the Devil, and in short, that he insulted him so far as to bid him fall down and worship him*. These facts must needs give us a very high opinion of the rank, which the principal Devil

*—— Si cadens adoraveris me. Matth. chap. iv.

held

held among spiritual natures, and may induce us to think, that the devils, over whom the Christians exercised so much power afterward, were devils of inferior sort: such as Scythianus, Terebinthus, and other magicians used to invoke from the tops of houses; in which exercise the two I have named fell down and broke their necks, according to Epiphanius, or one of them at least. But still the Devil, the first and greatest of the diabolical society, was a degraded being. He began to be so among the pagans. Such the Christians allowed him to be, and he would have passed no longer for a first principle, nor a god self-existent and independent any where, if the hereticks here spoken of had not revived and propagated this abominable opinion.

The very contrary happened in the tritheistical system, after the establishment of christianity: and the second and the third divine hypostases grew by degrees not only into a similitude of nature, a coequality and coeternity, but into a sameness with the first. Let us descend into some particulars, concerning the original and progress of this theology. If it is matter of curiosity; it is matter of importance too.

I said, that the pagan doctrine of a trinity was more ancient than tradition. But if we could believe those ingenious persons, who find whatever they have a mind to find in the Bible, we should believe it to have been not a pagan but a Jewish doctrine, not a philosophical hypothesis, but a divine revelation; not only older than tradition, but

but as old as the memorials Moses had of the creation. We are told in the first chapter of Genesis, that when God closed the work of the creation, he said, "let us make man after our image and likeness*:" and although he is made to speak, on the same subject, in the singular number, immediately afterward, yet christian divines assure us, that the Father addressed himself in these words to the Son and Holy Ghost, or to the first of them at least, and not to angels, nor any inferior intelligencies, as he is said to have done in the Timæus of Plato. This difference may deserve our observation the more, because Plato, in his writings, acknowledged a trinity; whereas there is no direct nor clear hint, and much less any express declaration, of a trinity in this place, nor in any other part of the writings of Moses. There are indeed, among a multitude of vague and obscure expressions in the books of the Old Testament, some that seem to intimate, like this, a plurality of divine beings, and these have been hauled to signify the christian trinity, though they were too equivocal and too dark to serve the purpose of leading men to the discovery of it, and therefore to serve any purpose at all. But the divines I have mentioned would do well to consider, that they have a much less right to conclude, that the authors of these books, wherein the unity of the godhead is every where established, meaned to

* Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram.

teach

teach a plurality of hypostases in it, which they assert; than any man would have to conclude from passages, that speak of God in the singular number, in books where polytheism is constantly asserted, that these authors meaned to teach the unity of the godhead, which these divines deny that they did. He who is persuaded, as I am, that many of those, who were polytheists in one sense, were monotheists in another, might assert the latter proposition without any absurdity. But these divines cannot assert either without the greatest, and especially since they know in how vague and loose a sense the word god is employed in the Scriptures, where it signifies sometimes a king or a chief magistrate, a prophet or a messenger from God, as we find in Exodus*, in Samuel†, in the Psalms §, in the Gospel of St. John ‖, and perhaps in other places.

But besides: if the doctrine of a trinity was found in express terms in the Pentateuch, we might be surprised, with some reason, that Moses had taught it to a people so strongly addicted, as the Israelites were, to the worship of many gods, and so little able to conceive the equality of three to one, and of one to three, a trinity in a unity, and a unity in a trinity; to a people to whom he would not teach the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and of a future state, on account of the many superstitions which this doctrine had

* Exod. chap. iv, ver. 16. ibid. chap. vii, ver. 1.
† 1 Sam. chap. xxvii, ver. 13. § Psalm lxxxi.
‖ Gosp. St. John, chap. x, ver. 34.

begot

begot in Egypt, as we must believe, or believe that he knew nothing of it, or assign some whimsical reason of this omission. But even in this case, which supposes an express mention of the Trinity in the Pentateuch, we could frame no conclusive argument to prove this doctrine Mosaical in it's origin. The religion, as well as government, of the Egyptians, were more ancient than that of Moses. He was learned in both; he borrowed from both; and no man of common sense can believe it more probable, whatever he may pretend, that the slaves instructed their masters, than that the masters instructed their slaves. If an express mention of the Trinity was made in other parts of the Old Testament, the argument would be still less conclusive, because the Jews had been acquainted with schools wherein this doctrine was taught, either as an hidden or publick doctrine, long before these books were renewed by Esdras, I use Bishop Huet's * expression, before some of them were writ, perhaps, and before the canon of them was completed, we know, very certainly, neither by whom, nor when.

If this doctrine was not Mosaical, neither was it Platonical in it's origin, and much less was it invented by the latter Platonists, in imitation of the christian trinity. Plato speaks of one most simple being, the first intelligible. He speaks of a first mind, and a first soul, that soul of the world, some materials of which were left by God, in the

* In Demon. Evang. "instauravit."

bowl * in which he made it, to be mingled up into the souls of men; for it was but reasonable, that the soul of man should be less perfect than the soul of the universe. That Plato was sincerely a dogmatist I am far from believing, and I have on this head more regard to Tully than to St. Austin. But the latter Platonicians, who were such, taught this doctrine, like others of his theological and metaphysical whimsies, for in him and them they were whimsies, in that style. They were often a little less intelligible than he. What we do not understand in Plato, we must not expect to understand better in Plotinus, in Jamblicus, in Proclus, nor in the summary of his doctrine by Alcinoüs; nor, in short, in any of those writers whose heads have been turned with Pythagorean and Platonick theology. It was all the unmeaning jargon of Egyptian and Eastern metaphysicks, and it did not acquire more meaning and perspicuity among the Greeks. On the contrary, I can easily persuade myself, that this jargon became still more obscure by the supposed improvements of Grecian philosophy. But still the first principles of it, and of this doctrine in particular, were more ancient than the philosophical æra in Greece. Strabo says, that the colleges of the Egyptian priests were deserts in his time, and he lived two or three centuries sooner than Plotinus, Porphyry, and Jamblicus. But there is no colour to conclude from hence, that the theology these priests had taught

* Crater is the word Mars. Ficin. uses.

was

was lost and forgot, when these philosophers arose among others, and the school of Alexandria flourished. There were men still famous for their knowledge, an Abammon, an Anebo for instance; and Jamblicus, who answered Porphyry's inquiries in a manner too mysterious not to be genuine, cites the authority of Egyptian Scriptures and traditions. The author of the Intellectual System mentions a passage which we may well take on his word, without consulting the original, wherein Jamblicus speaks plainly of three divine hypostases in the Egyptian theology. Eicton, an indivisible unity, worshipped in silence. Emeph, the same probably as Kneph, and Hammon or Ptha, or Osiris, an active principle, that was called by different names, according to the different powers and energies ascribed to it. These were the Phanes, Uranus, and Cronus, of Orpheus. The three gods praised by the Pythagoricians. These were the three kings, the first good, the first mind, and the first soul, of Plato. Pythagoras had been instructed in the Orphick mysteries of Aglaophemus, and Plato was the next who received a perfect knowledge of all these divine things, out of the Pythagorick and Orphick writings, according to the testimony of Proclus, in the first of his six books concerning the Platonick philosophy.

Thus it appears, that the notion of a trinity made a part of Egyptian theology, and had been communicated to the Greeks even by Orpheus, that is, five or six centuries before the Babylonian captivity, and therefore long before Esdras,

and long after Hermes. It is not worth while to make any observation on these dates, which would admit of several, nor to speak of the Zoroastrian, Chaldaick, or Samothracian trinities, any farther than to observe, that Democritus had written a commentary on the sacred letters of the Babylonians, and that both he and Hostanes, who lived in the time of Xerxes, and was himself a Chaldean, had taught the philosophy of that people or sect to the Greeks, and that this philosophy was understood to comprehend all the learning of the East. I proceed rather to observe, that this doctrine was taught with so much confusion, that the three Gods were sometimes spoken of collectively, and that at other times each of them was spoken of alone. The second was sometimes, and most frequently, reputed the maker of this visible world. He was represented at other times to be the first god, what light is to the sun; and I have read that Athanasius employed this comparison, after the heathen divines, though it be absurd, even to ridicule, in his system or in theirs. Sometimes the third hypothesis was spoken of as the maker of all things, according to patterns existing in the second, and at other times only as a soul which animated the material world, and which, together with it, composed one mighty animal. But the general run of opinion was different and more uniform. None of these heathen trinitarians had ever imagined three gods essentially one, and one god essentially three. Whenever they spoke of three hypostases, they all supposed them distinct

and

and subordinate. Rapin * acknowledges, that Proclus did distinguish them so; but he asserts, that Plotinus did not. Whence the Jesuit took this, I am ignorant. But it is certain, that far from confounding them, or saying that they were all one god, Plotinus has said the very contrary in many places, and particularly where he approves Plato's explanation of the doctrine of Parmenides, and teaches a first, second, and third unity in subordination.

SECT. XXVIII.

SINCE I have said so much on this subject, I will just mention some of the notions which these pneumatical madmen, Heathens, Jews, and Christians, entertained concerning spiritual natures inferior to these. I observe then, that an affectation of investigating and explaining the original and first principles of things was the reigning folly of ancient philosophers. Thus the systems of cosmogony were, like that of Hesiod, so many systems of theogony, and the physiology of the universe was nothing better than a wild rhapsody of fables and allegories. When these would not pass, except on the ignorant and superstitious vulgar, they proceeded to a more refined manner of philosophising. What they could not account for by any knowledge they had of the sensible world, they endeavoured to account for by the hypotheses

* Comp. de Platon. et Aristote.

they framed of an intellectual world. The sensible phænomena here below, to speak according to their conceptions, passed before them, and disappeared like the figures of a moving picture. They saw nothing permanent, nothing primarily efficient; a multitude of effects, no cause. They looked up to the heavens. Their senses were struck. They were surprised into idolatry first, they admired afterward, and the more they examined the more they admired. But their reason was not satisfied, nor the end of their inquiries attained: their reason was not satisfied, because they discovered nothing but effects above as well as below, no selfexistent, selfmoving, and intelligent causes. The ends of their inquiries were not attained, because they inquired after such causes as these, instead of resolving all ultimately into the infinite wisdom and power of one first efficient Cause, which is the proper conclusion of every physical inquiry. It solves every difficulty to a reasonable mind, that has inquired as far as the phænomena lead us; and if it did not, the want of a sufficient reason in them would be no reason for seeking one out of them. It would be a reason for stopping all inquiry.

Here we may fix the beginning of metaphysicks. The ends of their researches were unattainable. Physicks could not reach to them. But instead of abandoning these objects, philosophers resolved to change their method, to begin where they had hoped in vain to end, and to invent what they had flattered themselves that they should discover.

cover. For this purpose, the ideas of Plato were devised, which some imagine to be the same with the numbers of Pythagoras*. The first strangely absurd, the second quite unintelligible. I shall speak, therefore, of the first alone. Now the second hypostasis, or the first mind, is, according to this hypothesis, an archetypal world, which contains intelligibly all that is contained sensibly in our world. These are the things which truly are, and the phænomena, which appear realities to sense, are nothing more than their faint, transient, and fallacious images. These are the eternal, immutable patterns of things; not only of simple ideas which we receive, but of complex ideas which we make; not only of substances, but of modes and relations. There is a first whitenses, or a first sweetness, as there is a first pulchritude, or a first gratitude, a first bigness, or a first littleness. These are, therefore, the true objects of science. Some of the heathen divines supposed every one of these pretended abstract ideas to be a first principle, or a divine being; and there are christian divines who scruple not to talk of them as of eternal incorporeal essences, independent of God himself. Plato erected a mystick ladder, and he makes Socrates advise his auditors to climb by it into the region of forms, that is, from opinion to knowledge. Malebranche has no need of it. Things out of the mind he sees in God; and concerning things in it, he interrogates the Logos.

* Bruc. de convenientiâ numerorum Pythag. cum ideis Plat.

Pythagoras and Plato had learned of their eastern masters, and had taught others, to imagine a confused multitude of spiritual natures beside these, and beside the three first principles, under the different names of gods, angels, dæmons, and genii, spirits above the moon, good, happy, and immortal; and spirits below the moon, where death, misery, and all that is evil resides. In this system all is intelligible above, all is sensible below. Nor was this number of gods, and other spiritual natures, confused alone. It was indefinite too, and liable to be increased as philosophical purposes, and publick or even private superstition required. The latter Pythagoricians and Platonists, whom I confound because their doctrines were confounded together, far from softening the gross and most palpable absurdities of which we have spoken, imagined, beside all these beings, and immaterial entities residing in the first mind, an inconceivable number of eons, that is, of immortal spiritual beings, proceeding by irradiation, emanation, or some other metaphysical generation, from the first being, and inhabiting the heavens and the stars. Thus, if they did not determine the number of spiritual natures in general, as the number of angels was not determined by the Jews, they reduced them into determinate classes at least, and made them more apparently, and more immediately, dependent on the three hypostases that composed their deity. These were not called gods, indeed, though they might have passed for such, of the generated kind, at least; and though there

there were some persons who held the four first eons to be the tetrade of Pythagoras: nay, though some were absurd enough to call the first selfexisting spirit an eon, that is, an emanation, and therefore a contradiction as monstrous as that imputed to the Sabellians, who assumed, it has been said, that God the Father was his own Son, and God the Son his own Father. But the word God began to be more sparingly used, and for that reason, these doctrines might be, as they were, the more easily received by many who professed christianity. The Jews, I suppose, might hold these emanations flowing from the divine essence, like beams from the sun, just as well as their ten superior lights, called sephiroth; and the christians might well admit eons into their system, since they, as well as the Jews, admitted cherubim and seraphim, archangels and angels. From the hypothesis, therefore, of a trinity of supreme but subordinate gods, subordinate to one another, a trinity of ranks or orders of beings was derived. A multitude of unities proceeding from the first unity, and superior to the first mind; a multitude of minds proceeding from the first mind, and superior to the first soul; a multitude of souls proceeding from the first soul, and superior to all other natures; for they dreamed too of a universal nature sometimes, I know not whether in or out of the Deity, from which all particular natures and all plastick principles flowed.

By these means sufficient provision was made for superstition and theological speculations. The

same

same presumption, and the same misapplication and abuse of human reason that misled the heathen, misled the christian world, and erected the most extravagant hypotheses, that delirious imaginations could frame, into dogmas concerning divine and spiritual nature. The heathen had in their power that rule of inquiry, and that criterion of truth, which God has given to all his rational creatures, in the manifestation of his nature and attributes, as far as we are able to collect them from the system of his works, and from the course of his providence. It was therefore a great presumption, and a great abuse of reason, in those philosophers, to neglect this rule and this criterion; to inquire often without one, and to judge often against the other. But the christian divines have done worse. They have another rule, and another criterion, beside these, supernatural as well as natural religion, the word as well as the works of God. One of these might carry their knowledge farther than the other; and it carries, indeed, this kind of knowledge, such as it is, a great way; but they were inexcusable when they pretended to acquire any knowledge, on such important and awful subjects especially, beyond both. They did it however. Metaphysical heathens and cabalistical Jews imposed their reveries on christian fathers; and they imposed them on the whole christian church, mingled up with those of their own overheated brains.

But there is another cause of this pneumatical madness to be mentioned. It was not due alone

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to the fondness philosophers had of seeming to account metaphysically for what they could not physically; it was due likewise to a fondness of another kind, to a fondness of making man pass for one of those beings that participated of the divine nature. This had long possessed the heathen theists, and it possessed the Christians with more advantage. Neither of them pretended to such constant communications, and familiar conversations with the Supreme Being, as the Jews did: though both of them boasted of divine influences, of inspirations, and of revelations made to them sleeping and waking. But then both of them boasted a natural, though distant, relation with the Supreme Being, not only the moral relation of creatures to their Creator, but the natural relation of descendants to their common ancestor, a cognation, as Cudworth calls it, a sort of spiritual consanguinity. Several hypotheses had lengthened the chain of being very far from God downwards: and as divinity had been hauled down, humanity had been hoisted up, sometimes by gross and corporeal representations, sometimes by such as were more refined and spiritual. Man was made after the image of God in more systems than one, or rather, God was made after the image of man. The anthropomorphite heresy represented him with all the members, the shape and figure of a human body; and how the idolatrous heathens represented all their gods, and none more than Jupiter himself, in human bodies, and in human operations, is enough known

known. But there were other systems in which the similitude and natural relation between God and man were represented under images more refined and spiritual.

In the Jewish system, however we understand the words of Moses, the Supreme Being made the body of man of the dirt of the Earth. But the human soul was a portion of divine breath, "divinæ particula auræ." God breathed it into his face, and he became a living soul *; as God is said, in scripture language, to be the living God. In the Platonick system, inferior intelligencies were commissioned to make the whole animal kind, lest they should have been all immortal; but God reserved to himself the soul of man, which he made of the same substance as the soul of the universe, only a little less perfect, as it has been said. In the system we speak of, the divinity is allied to humanity as effectually as the pride of man could desire, as effectually as in either of these. We assume, and the latter Platonicians as well as their founder assumed, that man is compounded of body and soul. As Plato asserted, that all souls were made at once, so they asserted, that all souls were made of the same nature. Human souls, therefore, proceeding from the first soul, which was sometimes confounded with, and sometimes distinguished from the soul of the universe, and this soul being superior to all natures, except the minds proceeding from the first

* Inspiravit in faciem ejus spiraculum vitæ, et factus est homo in animam viventem.

mind,

mind, and the unities proceeding from the first unity, the relation between God and man was not very remote; whether they thought that the three hypostases composed one deity, as two substances composed one man; or whether they thought, that the three were distinct subordinate subsistencies, and the soul the lowest of them. The relation, I say, was not very remote either way; and these philosophers might think their hypothesis the more decent for not making this relation closer. Proclus therefore, or Plotinus, or one of that tribe, had reason, you see, on this plan of theology, to call the soul of the world the elder sister of the human soul: and if Origen did not come fully up to all these extravagancies, he came very near to them, when he asserted, that there was no difference, but that of merit, between the souls of archangels and angels, of devils and of men. The soul of Christ, according to this father, who was perhaps the greatest of the fathers, was of the same nature as all other rational souls, and was inseparably united with God, or made one with the Word*, only on account of superior merit in a preexisting state.

Thus human pride, as well as human curiosity, was indulged by heathen philosophers and by Platonising Christians. They grew up into a sort of pneumatical madness, or metaphysicks were the dotage of physicks: take which of the images you

*——inseparabilem cum Deo fecerit unitatem——cum Verbo Dei unum efficitur. Orig. de Princip. lib. 1.

please.

please. What these wild or dreaming philosophers could not do by any hypothesis about body, they attempted to do by the hypothesis of a soul: and since they could not make man participant of the divine nature by his body, however animated up to rationality, or with whatever adventitious powers they might suppose it endued, they thought fit to add a distinct spiritual to his corporeal substance, and to assume him to be a compound of both. A great variety of hypotheses was built on this one; but immortality was common to them all. In all of them, man was allied to God by some metaphysical genealogy; and even those of them, which, giving him immortality, exposed him to eternal damnation by it, were fondly received. He who considers what our manner of knowing is, what the faculties of our minds are, what the means we have of acquiring knowledge are; and how uncertain, how precarious, how confined it is in the highest degree of it; will think the soul as unfit to be participant of the divine nature as the body. Nay Plato, whom I quote on these occasions, "instar omnium," was so little able to prove the existence and immortality of the soul, and talked so much nonsense about the essence and essential properties of it, that he was obliged to have recourse from natural to moral arguments, which are indeed more plausible, but not more conclusive.

When these notions were once established, it was no hard matter to persuade men, nay it was no hard matter for those, who had a disposition

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and a temper of brain prone to enthusiasm, to persuade themselves, that by various methods of purification, and by intense meditation, which were in truth so many methods of growing mad, they could abstract themselves from all sensible objects, wrap themselves up in pure intellect, and be united to the Supreme Being. This madness has prevailed, and still prevails, under some form or other, and with little difference, in the East and West, among Christians and heathens, among the orthodox and hereticks. I need not quote instances. They have been frequent and notorious in China, in the East Indies, and in Europe. Pythagoras and Plato taught, that the supreme good of men was to be like God, and to be gods at last. Such opinions as these were held, with some variety of expression, more than of substance, by the Manichæans and other hereticks. The most orthodox fathers spoke of the communion of men with God, as a mystery unknown indeed to men and angels till it was revealed, but suspected by the heathen philosophers, who were impelled to desire it by a natural instinct. A strange assertion this must appear, and equally false in every part. The communion of man with God was not a suspicion, it was a dogma, true or false, and an article of Platonick faith; for Plato too required faith in traditional doctrines. It was not any particular instinct, that impelled the heathen to desire his communion; it was their pride and absurdity,

dity, the very human affections and passions from which these men pretended to be freed, that produced this presumptuous desire.

Such extravagant doctrines concerning divine and spiritual natures being taught with much confusion in the schools of heathen theology, they could not fail to be taught in those of christianity with the same confusion, and to produce all the different opinions, that divided the christian church. None of them knew very distinctly what they meaned by the word spirit and spiritual substance, which were so often in their mouths. That they meaned in general nothing more than breath, like animal breath, and a thin subtile matter that escaped human sight in the ordinary way of seeing, is evident. They said, after Zoroaster and the magi, that God was original light, or an intelligent fire. They said, that this light was incorporeal, and yet talked of it in such a manner as described a very corporeal light, invisible, however, to all eyes that were not fortified like those that enjoy the beatifick vision. In short, spirituality did not imply incorporeity, and if one of those great divines was at hand to be asked what he meaned by spiritual substance, he would answer in some metaphysical jargon; he would tell us, perhaps, that it is a substance "ab essential-"itate succisa," which are words I have read, but cannot translate.

SECT.

SECT. XXIX.

But it is time I should return to speak of the Trinity, and to show what discordant opinions arose about it among the Christians; for among the heathens, though there were different opinions, yet it was rather a secret doctrine, in which philosophers instructed their scholars behind the curtain, than a doctrine which they published to all men indifferently. Now it is impossible to conceive any thing more monstrous than some of these opinions, or more litigated, or longer unsettled than others. The least we have to observe of this kind is about the first hypostasis, and yet something of this kind is to be observed about that. For instance, though we cannot explain God's manner of being, and though to attempt it is unpardonable presumption, yet we may, and we must assert, that he is not a system of matter; because there arises, from the contrary supposition, a multitude of absurdities, that cannot destroy the demonstration of his existence, but that are inconsistent with it: notwithstanding which, the fathers of the church spoke of him sometimes in such terms, that to make out any sense in what they said, we must understand them to have thought him material, at least not immaterial; and what they thought him then it is not possible to conceive.

But the various doctrines that were taught

about the second and third hypostasis, the second especially, are still more beyond all conception extravagant and profane. Concerning these, and one or two more, it is necessary that I should descend into some particulars, in order to show, not only that private authority has imposed private opinions, that is, heresies, but that publick authority, the authority of the whole christian church, has imposed opinions, which are, therefore, deemed orthodox; although many of them are as absurd as any of those which are deemed heretical, many of them as disputable, many of them as little warranted by the Gospel, and many of them as incompatible with true theism; because, if they do not deny God, they do something as bad, nay worse, in Plutarch's sense, and in common sense they defame him. From a consideration of some few of these opinions and doctrines, it will appear how unsafely we trust, in matters of religion, to the authority of other men, which may lead us, and has led all those who have submitted to it, under pretence of making them better Christians, to be little if at all better than atheists. From a contemplation of the consequences of these opinions and doctrines, it will appear, that theology has made christianity ridiculous to men of sense, I mean the christianity that has been established by ecclesiastical and civil authority, and a perpetual bone of contention to fools. It will appear, that the atheistical objection to religion, which has been mentioned, groundless as it is, receives a colour from the inventions and the conduct

duct of that order of men, who have arrogated to themselves, exclusively of all others, the name and the power of a church, and whom Christians are accustomed to think and to call the church.

There have been reports, for such stories deserve to be esteemed no more, that Simon, who was a Samaritan, declared himself among that people to be the Father, among the Jews to be the Son, and among the Gentiles to be the Holy Ghost; that he passed the operations of his magical art for miracles, and that he broke his neck at last in attempting to fly before Nero, notwithstanding which he was adored at Rome. This latter circumstance, indeed, was founded on a blunder that has been since detected; though it imposed on Justin the martyr in the second century, and, which is much more strange, on Erasmus* in the sixteenth. Montanus pretended to be the Paraclete in the third century; or that God, who had preached and suffered in Christ, inhabited by the Holy Ghost in him. The excuse he made for coming so late, when Jesus had promised that he should come so much sooner, was the unpreparedness of the world to receive any sooner that austerity of religious observances, which he prescribed and practised. They were incredibly great, and such as may render it probable, that this impostor died the death of the traitor Judas, that he hanged himself in a fit of despair, as christian writers have affirmed. Such

* Vid. Ep. 831, in Irenæum.

tales as these would not deserve to be mentioned, if they did not serve to show the fanatical spirit of those ages, and to take off our wonder at all the heresies that arose in the christian church, by observing how easy it was to suppose a divine mission, or even to assume in opinion a divine nature. The appearance of false prophets, as well as their success in seducing, had been foretold; and it was the character of the times, which encouraged one, and promoted the other.

These false prophets were very numerous, and their success very various. But there was no article of christian faith and doctrine, which admitted of so much doubt and dispute, as the divinity of Christ first, and his rank in the godhead afterward. Cerinthus denied his divine nature. Menander asserted that he was a true man. Saturninus, that he was only the shadow and appearance of a man. Basilides, that the Christ did not suffer, but that he took the form of another, of Simon of Cyrene, I think, who suffered under his form, while he stood by and laughed at his own supposed crucifixion. Ebion maintained, like Menander, that Christ was a mere man, the son of Joseph. In calling him a good or a just man, he had the authority of St. Peter on his side, who calls him so in one place of the Acts, and even this he did not want; but in denying his resurrection from the dead, as he did, when he affirmed that the body of Christ remained in the grave, though his soul went to Heaven, he had this great apostolical

apostolical authority against him*. In fine, and to fill up the measure of heretical phrensy, the Sethites held, that the same person had been Seth first, and was Jesus afterward: and the Ophitæ, as they were called, that he had been the serpent who tempted Eve; so that he, who redeemed mankind by his blood, had made redemption necessary by his wiles, according to these madmen.

That there were no madmen at the same time among the best and most orthodox Christians, if it may be said with truth that any orthodox belief was settled so soon, we must not believe. There were many such, and the proofs are at hand, both in their writings, and much more in the anecdotes concerning them. But that which deserves our particular observation is, that the madness of those who are reputed orthodox never ran so high, as it did after the orthodox belief on this great article had been settled; if propositions, the very terms of which are sometimes ambiguous and sometimes quite unintelligible, may be said to have been settled. Certain it is, that after this the orthodox fathers held such language about the incarnation of Christ, as many of those who were reputed hereticks would have scrupled modestly and piously to have used. These words, the Son of God, were understood figuratively, I presume, and not literally, in the case of Foë, who assumed this appellation in India a thousand years before

* —— Virum probatum à Deo, justum à mortuis suscitatum.

the coming of Christ, and in the case of Zoroaster, who assumed it in Persia, perhaps, as anciently. They must have been understood even thus very falsely, in both those cases. But they might have been so understood, with some propriety of figure, in the case of Christ, who was at least the Messiah promised by God, foretold by the prophets, and sent in due time. If this had been the judgment of the church, the principal difficulties about his incarnation had been anticipated, as they were by the Nestorians, who held, that there were two persons, and not two natures only, in Christ, and who denied that the virgin was the mother of God. But the church having determined that these words, the Son of God, should be taken in their literal sense, it is astonishing to consider what profanations followed concerning this second generation of the Son; for the first had been before all worlds, that is, from all eternity. These profanations, collected from the most approved writers alone, to say nothing of the Creeds that are so solemnly recited in christian churches, would fill a volume. I shall mention a few only, which they, who are at all conversant in the writings of ancient and modern divines, will acknowledge to be fairly quoted.

It has been said then by the most orthodox*, piously and reverently too, as they and other divines assure us, "that the Father having chosen

* Eras. adv. Ep. Lutheri.

"the

" the virgin Mary for this second generation of " the son, he loved her as his spouse; he em- " ployed the angel Gabriel, whom he made his " pronubus or paranymphus, that is, his bride- " man, to procure her consent, without which " there can be no lawful marriage; and having " obtained it, his virtue overshadowed her, which " he tempered so that her human nature might " be able to support the divine embracement. In " this private embracement she conceived, the " Holy Spirit flowing into her, and producing " the effect of human seed. Thus the child " partook of the two natures of his parents, the " divine nature of his father, and the human " nature of his mother." In such gross terms, and under such gross images, has the mystery of the incarnation been explained. The words of St. Ambrose are too obscene to be translated. Take them in Latin therefore. " Non enim," says this modest archbishop, " virilis coitus vulvæ " virginalis secreta reseravit, sed immaculatum " semen inviolabili utero spiritus sanctus in- " fudit." St. Austin softens the terms, and changes the image a little. But if he does not appear quite so obscene, he must appear at least as mad as the others. " God spoke by his angel," says this saint, " and the virgin was got with " child by the ear*." There were those who asserted, that Christ did not assume his body in the

* Deus loquebatur per suum angelum, et virgo per aurem impregnabatur.

virgin's womb, but that he brought it from Heaven, and passed through her as water passes through a pipe*. They were called hereticks for their pains, and yet surely that doctrine might have been sung or said in the churches, as decently and with as much edification, as those hymns were, in one of which it was said, that the virgin conceived, "non ex virili semine, sed mystico spiramine," and in the other, that the Word or Logos entered at her ear, "et exivit per auream portam."

Such extravagant and profane notions and expressions, as have been last mentioned, came into fashion chiefly after the Nicæan council, which Constantine thought it necessary to convene. How ill he judged, and how ill his successors judged on similar occasions, long and woful experience has manifested. What passed before his time showed, that attempts to explain divine mysteries must be of necessity endless; and what passed in and after his time, that it is to no purpose, at least to no good purpose, to impose any authorised definitions of them. What revelation leaves a mystery must remain such; and there cannot be a greater absurdity, than to imagine that human authority, call it how you please, ought to determine, or will determine, to submission, those who think that such definitions are not conformable to their true criterion, which is the revelation itself. The only difference is this.

* Aug. de Tem. Serm. 22.

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The men who dispute and wrangle on such points as these, wherein neither morality nor good government are concerned, cannot do much hurt, if they are left to dispute and wrangle among themselves; whereas if publick authority takes notice of them so far as to meddle in their quarrels, and to decide any way, civil disorders are sure to follow, and the blood of nations is spilled in wars and massacres, to extinguish a flame which some hot-headed priest, or delirious metaphysician, has kindled, and which it does not extinguish neither.

What revelation leaves a mystery must remain such: and if any thing was ever left a mystery, the doctrine of the Trinity was so. Christ had no where called himself God. His apostles called him Lord.* Peter had once declared him to be a man: and Paul, preaching to the Athenians, speaks of him rather as a man than as God. He makes no mention of the Son of God, nor of the Holy Ghost. These inconsistent writers talk often a different language on the same subject, and contradict in one place what they have said in another. How they came to do so in this case, let others account; but let them account for this conduct of the apostles better than the greatest ancient and modern divines have done. According to them Peter was afraid of scandalising the Jews. The Jews believed one God, had never heard of the Son, nor Holy Ghost, and would have been re-

* Eras. ubi supra.

volted

volted against christianity more than they were, if they had heard the man, whom they had seen crucified and buried, called God. Paul was afraid of confirming the Gentiles in their polytheism, by preaching to them that Christ was God. The prudence of this method, by which the young in Christ were fed with milk, and those of riper years with solid food, for the whole mystery was revealed to them, has been extremely applauded by the most approved doctors of the church. I am unwilling, however, to take this for the reason of the conduct, which the two apostles held. It savours too much of an outward and inward doctrine, the double dealing of pagan divines. It seems unworthy of men commissioned by Christ, inspired by the Holy Ghost, and able to enforce all they taught by miracles. It bears too near a resemblance to the unrighteous cunning of the Jesuits, who are said to conceal the humiliation and passion of the Saviour from their Neophites in China. But whatever reason the apostles had for it, which they who boast to be their successors have no right to determine, this was their conduct. The divinity of the Word grew by slow degrees into general belief among Christians: the divinity of the Holy Ghost by degrees still slower, and the coequality and consubstantiality of the three hypostases last of all. It fared with the Son, in the first ages of christianity, much as it has fared since with the mother of God. Strong figurative expressions, which the apostles employed on some, which other doctors and saints employed on all occasions, and which were animated, doubtless

doubtless, by the opposition of heathens, Jews, and hereticks, might contribute to exalt the Son at the expense of the Father's supremacy; as we know very certainly, that by such means and on such motives as these the virgin acquired the title of deipara, to whom, if she is not a goddess avowed in express terms, divine honours are paid, and her intercession is implored with the Father and the Son. She is so plainly distinguished from both, that her intercession with either carries more propriety along with it, than the intercession of the Son with the Father; since these two consubstantial persons cannot be intelligibly distinguished from one another, and since it is of the utmost absurdity to advance, that the same person intercedes with himself.

What has been said will appear evidently true, if we look into the anecdotes of the apostolical and following ages; or if we consult, with due discernment, those who have made them their study. Many of the primitive Christians, struck with religious awe, had a very reasonable scruple of using any appellations, which were not contained in the Scriptures. Many of them dared not give that of the true God to Christ, before the Nicæan council, nor several after it: and even the most orthodox, who scrupled not to call him very God of very God, begotten not made, when the council had pronounced, were still afraid to give this appellation to the Holy Ghost. Nay from the time that the Macedonians were condemned soon after the Arians, in another council, and even

to

to this hour, the Holy Ghost has not been deemed God by generation, but by procession or spiration; that is, by the breathing of the Father through the Son, or by the joint breathing of the Father and the Son; of which difference in an identity of nature we must be content to say what Erasmus said, "satis est credere." In short, the orthodox doctrine of the trinity was never taught explicitly and positively by any divine authority. It was a vague opinion in heathen theology, which intended no more, perhaps, than to personify the wisdom and goodness of the supreme omnipotent Being. It has been a theological dispute in all ages among Christians, and the precise definition, according to which we are obliged to profess that we believe it, is founded on authority intirely human, and therefore undeniably fallible, imperial and ecclesiastical authority.

If it be said, that the decisions in favour of the second and third hypostases have been made by councils under the influence of the Holy Ghost, I shall only say, the question is begged ridiculously, when the influence of the Holy Ghost is supposed to prove the very point in dispute, his divinity; and that they therefore must have no small share of stupidity, of ignorance, and effrontery, who can insist on such an answer in this age. If it be said that the councils, which condemned the opinions of Paul of Samosata, of Sabellius, of Arius, of Photinus, and of other hereticks, were guided, in the canons they made, and the anathemas they pronounced, by the unerring

erring rule of Scripture and uniform tradition; I shall only ask, what that Scripture was? It was not the Old Testament most surely; for there is no reason to allow, that this Testament contains any notices of the Trinity. Was it the New Testament? But we may defy the ablest chemist, that ever worked on those materials, to extract from them such a trinity, as that is which the christian church acknowledges. Passages that seem favourable to it, in part, may be, as they have been, produced. But then passages that are really inconsistent with it, in the whole, may be, as they have been, opposed to these: and the famous adjective homoüsios will not be found consecrated by scripture language: though even this word does not signify very determinately what it has been applied to signify, if identity alone be the greatest, and similitude but a less unity, as the learned say *. As little grounds are there, in any part of the New Testament, even in the Epistles of St. Paul, for that impudent analysis which school divines and others have presumed to make of the Deity, when they have talked so much nonsense about processions or emanations, persons, relations, notions, or terms, and the indwelling of these divine beings in one another. Certain figurative and vague expressions, of which there are many, have been picked up here and there, and have been dragged to countenance, if that was

* ——Consimilis essentia. Eras. Identitas maxima est unitas: minor unitas est similitudo. Mart. Lexic.

possible,

and Macedonius. That such men as these should be divided in their opinions concerning the Trinity, cannot seem strange to any person, who considers the nature of this doctrine, how it came into the church, how it grew up there, and how open to dispute it remained three hundred years after Christ. To believe three gods, three substances essentially different, or three subsistencies, as they were called by some, in the godhead, distinct and subordinate, the second to the first, and the third to the second, was not hard on the principles of heathen theology, in which such a trinity had been taught. But on the principles of Jewish and Christian theology, such a belief could not be admitted without manifest inconsistency; and it is not conceivable, that Philo could reconcile Plato and Moses, when he talked of a second god. To save this inconsistency, and to avoid as much as possible all appearance of polytheism, several expedients were devised. Some, like Sabellius and his master Noëtus, denied a distinction of persons in the godhead: so that God the Father was, in the system of these hereticks, as it is said, his own Son, and God the Son his own Father; nay the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost suffered together in the passion and person of Christ, since they were but one person, under three notions and appellations. Some, like Paul of Samosata before the Nicæan council, and Photinus, at that time, or immediately after it, maintained, that Jesus was called the Son of God only on account of his sanctity; that the word descended on him, and then returned to the Father;

and

and that he did not commence the Christ, till he had been baptized in the Jordan.

As some were afraid of destroying the unity by the trinity, others were afraid of destroying the trinity by the unity. Arius thought to save both, by opposing the unitarians, who took away all distinction of persons, and the trinitarians, who held, that they were all equal. He made the distinction of persons as strong as he could, in contradiction to the former; and he was so far from acceding to the latter, that he denied the Son to be either in rank or nature equal to the Father, and the Holy Ghost to be so even to the Son. The strict trinitarians, who became afterward the sole orthodox, might hold the Father to be alone eternal in this sense, "quod careat origine;" for "duæ personæ ab ipso sunt, ipse à "nullo." So Hilarius expressed himself. But he and the rest of them believed an eternal generation of the Son, and procession of the Holy Spirit, who had no beginning in time, though they had an original in nature, the nature of the Father. The Arians, on the other hand, denied this community of nature, held the Father alone to be the Supreme God, and the Son to be the first of all creatures, but a created being. If this doctrine had become orthodox, as it did very nearly, notwithstanding the decision of the Nicæan council, the Macedonians would have formed no sect. The divinity of the second hypostasis failing, that of the third would have fallen of course; which it is plain that Arius saw, when

he urged nothing, and the Nicæan council added nothing to the Creed concerning the Holy Ghost. But the hereticks of those days were so afraid of admitting any coequality with the Supreme Being, that they opposed the divinity of the third hypostasis, even after that of the second had been established. They were easily defeated. The same sort of proof, as had served in one dispute, served in the other: and though the orthodox themselves distinguished generation from procession, yet the Scripture joining the Son and the Holy Ghost so often together, and Christ having ordered baptism to be administered in the name of the Holy Ghost as well as of the Father and the Son, the divinity of the Holy Ghost was confirmed, and these councils employed, very wisely, authority instead of argument. It was impossible, indeed, to show, by any subtilty of logick, that this doctrine was not polytheistical; since the admission of three or of three hundred gods is equally so. There remained, therefore, nothing to be done, but to make a mystery where they found none: and having decreed, that there are three gods, to decree at the same time that there is but one; for so the Athanasian doctrine must sound to every man who does not comprehend, and that is every man living, all the profound metaphysicks that have been employed to distinguish away the apparent contradiction, unless he gives his understanding up to a jargon of words, and can fancy he believes without any clear and distinct ideas.

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In this manner was the fundamental article of christianity imposed at first, without a plain and harmonical concurrence of the Scriptures, or of tradition; though such a concurrence, at least, was necessary to make it a revealed doctrine, and of divine obligation. It continues to be imposed still: and there is but too much reason to apprehend, that these theological attempts, to persuade mankind that three distinct persons in the godhead make but one God, have induced some to believe, that there is no God at all: just as the pretensions of heathen philosophers to knowledge really unattainable induced several to assert, that there is no knowledge at all. If I was to write the history of Arianism, it would be a part of my subject to show, with how much difficulty the orthodox doctrine prevailed against it; how it revived often even under Constantine, much more under some of his successors; and was, at last, drowned in the blood of those who professed it. The Athanasians and the Arians were, in some respects, like the Prasini and the Veneti. The principal difference between the first was in the words they used, and between the last in the colours they wore. Neither the divines, nor the chariot drivers, were left to contend by themselves in the schools, and in the circus. Men, women, children, all the world, took part on one side or the other. The state was disordered by the circensian, and the church and the state both by the synodical contests. The civil power, which should have put both down, kept both up: and magistrates

were as partial in one case, and as bigot in the other, as the vulgar. It were to be wished, that the comparison would hold in one circumstance more; for, in the reign of Justinian, the Prasini and the Veneti were both abolished.

SECT. XXX.

THE accounts we have of Athanasius and of Arius are come to us in the writings of the former, and those of the same party, and, therefore, may be deemed extremely partial, as they are extremely violent: and yet very little sagacity is necessary to discover, even in them, that the saint had less moderation, and not less ambition, than the heretick; that he had the spirit of intrigue, as much as Eusebius of Nicomedia; and that he was one of those churchmen, whom pride and obstinacy of temper, under the name of zeal, render equally fit to persecute, and to bear persecution. The authority of the persons, who were at the head of this dispute, deserves, in a word, no consideration. But as the Athanasian doctrine was confirmed by the first and all other councils, except a very few, it may be proper to inquire what regard these councils deserve. Now as to that, we may say boldly, because we can prove invincibly, that they deserve none; whether we judge of them analogously to those that have been held in our time, or near it, or whether we judge of these primitive councils by what we know of them from

from contemporary, and the most orthodox authority.

The first attempt to silence Arius, and to condemn his doctrine, was in a provincial council held at Alexandria. The letters Osius carried thither from Constantine seemed calculated rather to compose and reconcile, than to animate and condemn. This was certainly the aim of Eusebius of Nicomedia, in whom Constantine had much confidence, that of the emperor himself, and not improbably that of Osius too. This council had not been unanimous in their subscriptions, and nothing had been formally decided against Arius in it. But yet I think, that the terms, which made so much noise in the Nicæan council afterward, were employed in this; the terms I mean of one nature or substance, and three persons or subsistencies; for it was grown to be a point of honour among most of the prelates and great men of the church, not to suffer that the founder of their religion should pass for any thing less than a God, even the Supreme God. This circumstance might encourage Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, or rather his prompter Athanasius; and Arius might think it a victory not to be soon defeated. He might think, that if his doctrine could stand the first brunt of opposition, it had as fair a chance of becoming orthodox as the other. Thus the dispute continued, and the disorders occasioned by it at Alexandria, where it was carried on with open violence. It spread; it gained the court. The influence of the

clergy on private conscience, and the influence of private conscience on publick tranquillity, began to show themselves in a dangerous manner. Constantine saw, and apprehended the consequences. To prevent them, he resolved to call together a general council, and to preside in it; for so in effect he did. He flattered himself, that an ecclesiastical dispute would be best determined in an ecclesiastical assembly; and that a parcel of wrangling priests would be silenced by a synod, representative of their whole order. He resolved to support their decrees, whatever they should be; about which it is plain enough, both by the language and the conduct he held, that he was much less solicitous, than he was to have any decision that might put an end to the dispute: for which purpose there is room to suspect, that he took, among others, one method, rather political than fair. I say, that there is room to suspect this. I dare say no more in opposition to that profusion of learning, which has been employed to defend the first Nicæan council, and to prove the doctrine of the trinity, that was settled in, it to be an œcumenical decision. Mr. Selden published in Latin, from an Arabian manuscript, the antiquities of the church of Alexandria, written by Eutychius, a famous patriarch of that church, in the ninth or tenth century. Now this author having given a list of these patriarchs, from Hanarias a cobler, who was the first of them, down to Alexander, who was the eighteenth, relates, that Constantine summoned a council at Nicæa, to determine

determine the dispute between this patriarch and Arius. The council consisted, he says, of two thousand and forty-eight, whereof three hundred and eighteen were unanimous in declaring the divinity of Christ. The rest were divided by a great number of different opinions, "sententiarum dis-"crimine multiplici;" they could not agree among themselves, but they all opposed the three hundred and eighteen. Selden produces two authorities more, to confirm that of Eutychius: the authority of Joseph, an Egyptian presbyter, in his preface to a version of the councils into Arabick, from ancient christian monuments; and that of Ismael Ibn Ali, a Mahometan historian of reputation. They speak to the same effect: and by the concurrent testimony of all three the orthodox doctrine of the trinity was not that of the whole council, nor of a majority of the fathers. It seems to have been rather a profession of faith drawn up by the bishop of Jerusalem for the emperor, "quam descripserat ei episc. Hierosoly-"mit.;" the emperor had it read in the synod: three hundred and eighteen approved it out of the whole number: these were unanimous, the rest could agree in nothing, "nec inter se concordes, "nec in fide suâ." It was necessary to the design of Constantine, therefore, that the decision of a party in the council should pass for an œcumenical decision. On the whole, there is room for the suspicion I have mentioned; for if it should be objected, that these testimonies were given some centuries after the events happened, the

same objection may be made to the most approved of Greek and Roman, Jewish and Christian, ecclesiastical and civil, sacred and profane antiquities, as Mr. Selden observes. Eutychius and Joseph were learned antiquaries; they were both orthodox. They wanted no materials, and their bias was strongly in favour of the Nicæan council. Eutychius declares his approbation of the doctrine, and Joseph compares the three hundred and eighteen to the angels for their excellency, and to the stars for their splendour. The prejudices of these men were in favour of the doctrine and council, to both of which the Mahometan historian must have been very indifferent: and, in this particular respect, his testimony may be deemed more credible than that either of Athanasius, or of Arius, would be*.

If Constantine flattered himself, that this expedient would impose a uniform belief, the event showed, that he was much deceived. Such disputes are in their nature not determinable: and all attempts to determine them by dogmatical decisions are palliative remedies, of as bad conse-

* N. B. Since I have mentioned Mahometan testimonies concerning the establishment of the Trinitarian doctrine, may I not be allowed to observe, that this doctrine gives the Mahometans as much reason to say, that the revelation which Mahomet published was necessary to establish the unity of the Supreme Being, in opposition to the polytheism which Christianity had introduced, as Christians have to insist, that the revelation which Christ published a few centuries before was necessary, to establish the unity of the godhead against Pagan polytheism?

quence

quence as no decision at all, and of worse, when a submission to them is enacted by fraud, or force and violence. He was not yet acquainted with the pertinacious spirit of the clergy, who never gave up a point which ambition or interest, enthusiasm or humour has made any of them advance; though the peace of mankind, and the lives of millions be at stake, in a quarrel that concerns neither natural religion, nor even the essentials of revealed religion. Experience soon informed him better; for though Arianism was condemned, and the reverend fathers racked their brains to find out words, that might establish not a similitude of the Son to the Father, but a sameness and consubstantiality with him, nay, though the chiefs of the sect seemed to submit to the authority of the council, like the bishops of Nicomedia and Cæsarea, yet the Arians were Arians still. They seemed to submit to it; but in truth they submitted to that of the emperor, who would have a decision at any rate. The council made no converts. He made some hypocrites, who answered his purpose enough, by playing with words so dexterously, as to adopt Athanasian terms and retain Arian opinions.

How should the authority of this council have any weight with those who thought like Arius, when it had none with those who thought like Athanasius? And it had none even with the very best of these. Notwithstanding the zeal of St. Gregory of Nazianzen for the Nicæan doctrine, it is evident that it had none with him. He maintained his

his opinions as independently of this council, to which they were conformable, as Arius could maintain his, that stood in direct opposition to it. How else can we account for what he says in a letter to Procopius? I am determined," says the saint, speaking of councils, "to avoid all "such assemblies for the future." He declares that he "had not seen any council, whose con- "clusion had been happy, nor who had done "more to cure, than to increase and aggravate "evils." He speaks in other places to the same effect. But what he says in his book about bishops, to whose characters he was much less favourable, though he was a bishop, than St. Jerom was to their order, and what he says in some of his orations or sermons, particularly in his farewel sermon, when he quitted his bishoprick, and retired to his solitude, go to the bottom of this matter, and show how impossible it was, that a council could be assembled in this famous fourth century, when so many important articles of faith were settled, that deserved any more regard than that of Trent. Men were raised to the episcopal dignity too easily, he says, without regard to their morals, and without any other merit than a great desire to be bishops. The ignorance of these, however, was the least evil; for there were others who became the "ludibria," maygames of life, indifferent about the faith, and ready to take any side, followers of the modes and customs of the times, not of the laws of God. Lions to their inferiors, but fawning dogs to the great. He continues,

tinues. When they have nothing else to boast, they boast of their very iniquity. This is that mystery of iniquity, which has overspread almost the whole world. He describes some of these pastors of the church indulging themselves in all the effeminate luxury of the age, and patrons of their own vices in the vices of others, giving others leave to sin, that they might sin with greater licence themselves. He paints, in a sort of contrast with these, some who put off their brass for gold, who wore long beards, solemn countenances, and modest habits; whose heads were reclined, their walk and gesture as composed, as their mien and their voice soft and gentle, "vocem perte-"nuem." They affected wisdom in all their outward air, but they had none in their minds, where it should principally reside. He compares the noise and confusion of their assemblies to those of the circus and the theatre. He complains, that they were iniquitous and absurd judges of things; "iniqui et absurdi rerum judices." That names directed their hatred and their friendship; and that they did not blush to contradict themselves before the same auditory. In short, he congratulates himself, that he should sit no longer among those cranes and geese. He leaves them to their thrones and tyranny. He bids them be insolent by themselves. He bids them adieu. "Valete, "pergite. Ego me ad Deum convertam," says the saint.

I might collect many more anecdotes like these from the writings of St. Gregory, and might strengthen them too by other orthodox authorities,

ties, both before and after his time; by that of St. Cyprian, for instance, who wrote about a century before, as high an opinion as he entertained and propagated of bishops, and of the whole ecclesiastical order; and by that of Sulpitius Severus, who wrote about a century after his time. I will quote the last particularly, because it occurs to my memory, as I am writing, and is very short. Sulpitius Severus, a zealous Christian, of the fifth century, says, that in his time, the best of the clergy*, those who did not addict themselves

* Though I have not quoted St. Cyprian as particularly as I have quoted St. Gregory of Nazianzen in the text, it may be proper to do so in this note, that you may see the character of the Christians, and even of the martyrs or confessors of the third century, as full as you have seen that of the bishops and councils of the fourth century. St. Cyprian then speaks to this purpose, in his book "De Lapsis:" that the Christians of his age were given up to insatiable avarice; that the clergy were unsound in their faith, and licentious in their manners; that the men were effeminate, and disgraced their beards; that the women were coquet and lewd; for he accuses them here of prostituting their members*, that is, the members of Christ to the Gentiles; and, somewhere else, of lying with the christian priests. He says, that not only rash swearing, but perjury, insolent contempt of their superiors, poisonous malice, and obstinate hatred, prevailed among the generality of Christians. He says, in particular, that many bishops, despising their holy function, were taken up with secular affairs: that they deserted their flocks, wandered into the provinces of others, traded, exercised usury, got fraudulently into the possession of estates, to which

* Prostituêre gentilibus membra Christi—cum viris, iisque clericis, concumbentium.

selves to trade and usury, nor live in fine houses, nor attend to the improvement of their great estates, did something worse; that they waited for

which they had no right, grew rich, and left the poor to starve. Such was the purity of an age famous for martyrs and confessors, and at the same time, for the greatest dissolution of manners. Nay, even confessors themselves fell into the same dissolution, and were guilty of the most abominable crimes, "fraudes, stupra, et adulteria," as the saint assures us, in his famous and favourite book, "De Unitate Ecclesiæ." He adds, that injustice, insolence, and perfidy, might be learned of these confessors, and he cautions Christians against following their examples, "nemo——de confessoris moribus discat." Such was the clerical order, such were those martyrs or confessors, who obtained by their sufferings the greatest fame and authority in the church, at a time when many articles of faith were determined, and many more were on the point of being determined in the next century. As little credit as Cyprian may deserve in other cases, he deserves much in this; for he advances nothing improbable, nothing which must not have been of publick notoriety when he wrote. It may seem strange, indeed, that so great a stickler as he was, for episcopal dignity and authority, and for the preeminence of the religious over the civil society, should transmit such a character of them to posterity. But this may be accounted for, perhaps, by assuming, for I grow very apt to assume, by conversing so much with ecclesiastical writers, who assume much oftener than they prove, that the saint applied to every bishop especially, and even to every priest, what modern divines applied to the pope, when they maintained, in the case of Julius the Second, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, that no vices whatever could degrade this dignity, nor lessen this authority, unless there was a suspicion of heresy[b].

[b] Vid. Guicciardin, at the end of his ninth book.

presents

presents which were made to them, and disgraced the dignity of their ministry by a venal sanctity, and by the price they set on the exercise of it. These complaints were not arrows shot in the dark. All of them were published at the time. Some of the keenest were so in a sermon preached before the whole court and people of Constantinople, in the church of Sancta Sophia. They are more than sufficient, therefore, to take away all that respect for councils, even for the Nicæan, which has been sounded so high by divines in all ages, from the fourth downward. They may serve likewise to take off our wonder at all the revolutions; to which the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity was exposed, in an age when councils contradicted councils; when four or five hundred fathers of the church, for I think there was so many at Rimini, to say nothing of the council of Seleucia, and others, could prevaricate about a doctrine so lately established, and when Arianism could revive in this short space of time, so much as to make one orthodox doctor * complain, that except a few, who were of his party you may be sure, all the rest of the ten provinces of Asia had not the true knowledge of God; and another †, that the world was surprised to find itself Arian. "Miratus est orbis se esse Arianum:" in short, when not only a great number of the "gens linigera," the surplicewearing crowd, but Liberius,

* St Hilary. † St. Jerom.

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the Bishop of Rome, and that great column of orthodoxy, Osius, became fautors of the Arians.

The truth is, that whether laymen came into these synods or not, as St. Gregory of Nazianzen complains bitterly that they did, the spirit of the court was the spirit that directed the determinations of councils. A succession of princes like Valens would have made the whole Roman empire Arian. A succession of princes like Julian might have made it pagan again. But a succession of princes like Theodosius, like him, at least, in his religious character, banished Arianism to the Goths, among whom it was at last extinguished by Recaredus in Spain, though not by means as gentle as Mariana would insinuate. If Christianity was not propagated, as the religion of Mahomet was, yet it is true to say, that the system of christian theology, which has passed for the christian religion ever since, and has done so much hurt under that notion, was established by the sword, and by every kind of persecution.

The orthodox opinion concerning the divinity of Jesus had two advantages over the other, which could not, as I think they did not, fail to produce great effects on all those who were zealously affected to christianity, or who desired for any reason, religious or political, to maintain the fervour of others. The first of these advantages was this. The orthodox belief gave a greater lustre to christianity. If the other came more nearly to the truth, and contradicted human reason less, yet this held out more of the marvellous, and

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the marvellous, in matters of religion, that is presumed to be revealed, will impose and affect more than truth and reason. This was an advantage, which the ablest of the fathers saw and improved; and therefore some of them always maintained it with a zeal, which would have been called heretical obstinacy, if they had not happened to be declared orthodox at last, against those who were willing to soften certain terms, for the sake of peace and union; and they preferred to both these the keeping it intire. They succeeded. They took every other advantage, that the course of events offered, or intrigue could procure; they improved them all by this, and they transmitted to posterity the orthodox doctrine, after many struggles.

Every able man saw and improved this advantage; but the other was of a nature to make itself felt by every man who embraced Christianity, for it proceeded from the pride of the human heart. That the Supreme Being should send an inferior being, who was for that reason called his Son, to redeem mankind, and to give them a more perfect law, might be thought sufficient to satisfy divine justice, that required, according to them, a victim to be offered up; and even an honour more than sufficient done to creatures, whom he had placed in the lowest rank of intelligent beings and moral agents. But that he should send his Son, who was consubstantial with himself, in glory equal, in majesty coeternal, to fulfil such purposes as these, might be thought such a

mark

mark of favour and predilection, as raised the sons of men to a much higher rank in the scale of being. Agreeably to this notion, we find that the angel in the Apocalypse would not suffer St. John to adore him, but declared himself a fellow servant to the Evangelist, and to all those who had the testimony of Jesus*. This respect was not shown even to Abraham, nor Daniel, before the incarnation of Christ, and the redemption of man, which is a mystery which the angels acknowledge and reverence†. They acknowledge it, and by that they acknowledge the dignity of the human nature. Thus far Erasmus § carries the observation. But a right reverend archbishop ‖ of our church carries it much farther, at the close of one of his sermons, where he observes very pathetically, that when the angels fell, God left them in their fallen state; but when man fell, he sent his Son, his only begotten, his dearly beloved Son, to redeem the race by his sufferings and passion. One of these divines raised us to an equality with the angels, the other to a superiority over them.

There are a multitude of other instances, ready to be brought, wherein fathers of the church and councils have imposed their own imaginations, and, perhaps, their mistakes, for revealed doctrines

* Vide ne feceris, conservus tuus sum, et fratrum tuorum habentium testimonium Jesu. Apoc. c. xix.

† —— In quem desiderent angeli prospicere. St. Peter, 1 Ep. c. 1.

§ Cateches. 6. ‖ Tillotson.

and divine truths, cursing and persecuting all those who dissented from them. These instances do not fall within the bounds I have set to myself. One of them, however, shall be just mentioned, because it has been the subject of much controversy, and the cause of much disorder in many countries, and is so at this time in France. Our countryman, Pelagius, appeared in the beginning of the fifth century. He was called the Britannick serpent. His first antagonist was the surly, foul-mouthed controversist Jerom: his greatest was Austin. He was condemned by councils, and excommunicated by popes. But he was a great genius, a great divine, and a great philosopher; and if he was too much of a Stoician in his theology, he might have reproached those who opposed him, St. Austin particularly, for mingling too much Platonism in theirs. The principal objection to his doctrine was, that he ascribed too much to freewill, and nothing to grace. But it may be, that if he magnified too highly the sufficiency of one, he extenuated, rather than rejected, the use and efficacy of the other. The semi-pelagians, at least, who dissented from the African bishop about predestination and grace, avoided the extreme into which Pelagius was understood to go, and maintained a necessary concurrence of freewill and grace; by which they avoided the absurd circular reasoning of those, who make faith necessary to obtain grace, and grace necessary to produce faith. Man was to cooperate with God in their theology, and salva-

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tion was open to all who did so. This doctrine appears moderate, reasonable, and no way repugnant to the ideas of divine justice and goodness; whereas, that of an absolute predestination, of election and reprobation, is scandalously so. A Jew accustomed to believe that God had chosen one nation to be his peculiarly, and exclusively of all others, might fall easily into an opinion, that a divine partiality for particular men had succeeded, and taken the place of a divine partiality for a particular nation. But it has been, and it must be always, very impolitick in divines to fix such blasphemy on the great master of their artificial theology, if St. Paul may be understood naturally and coherently in another sense. The apostle meaned, as Locke * explains his meaning, not very naturally, perhaps, nor coherently, to assert the right which God has over all the nations of the Earth, to raise and to favour one, to depress and reject another, according to his good pleasure, and the impenetrable secrets of his providence. The Jews were rejected nationally, because they refused nationally to receive the Messiah. But those of them who received him were not included in this rejection. He had chosen them nationally, by virtue of his sovereignty. By virtue of the same, he had rejected them nationally likewise: but of personal election or rejection among those who embraced christianity, and so became the people of God instead of the Jews,

* Vid. Locke, in his Paraph. and notes, 7.

the apostle had no intention to speak, if this expositor guesses well. Thus indeed we must understand St. Paul, to reconcile his doctrine a little to common sense*, to common equity, and to such notions of the divine perfections as it would be much more impious to disbelieve, than to disbelieve him. But St. Austin thought fit to understand him otherwise, and to believe the apostle according to his own interpretation of some passages, in defiance of common sense, common equity, and true theism. St. Austin, whom other fathers and councils have followed, St. Luther, St. Calvin, and St. Jansenius, have supposed a mystery where there is none, except in the style of a writer, the least precise and clear that ever

* I say a little; because it may be observed, that when Mr. Locke asserts, on this occasion, that God proceeds to favour or reject nations arbitrarily, and by the right of his sovereignty alone, without any regard to their moral character, he prostitutes still, in some degree, that of God himself, and sacrifices a great deal too much to his respect for St. Paul. In order to soften the absurdity of the apostle, who meaned, as it appears plainly enough by the context, notwithstanding this ingenious device, just what Calvin supposed him to mean, he destroys the great sanction of natural law, by which the virtues of societies tend necessarily to their prosperity, and the vices to their misery. Surely this doctrine of absolute predestination, and that of unlimited passive obedience, are doctrines of the utmost absurdity, though taught by this apostle; with this difference, however, that one teaches us to submit to the arbitrary will of man, and the other, that God proceeds in his government, as human tyrants do, by arbitrary will. One is absurd: the other both absurd and impious.

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writ: and under pretence of explaining this mystery, they have blasphemed, as St. Paul himself did, if his sense was theirs. They have made a god, such as no one, who knows what he says, when he says he believes a god, can acknowledge: and they impute to him, what they who believe a devil might impute, with great propriety, to that wicked spirit. This strange and impious doctrine has been transmitted to us from the fifth century, and though disputed by some, is held, in general, to be orthodox. They who agree in little else, agree in this. Jansenists, Lutherans, Calvinists, and I am sorry to say, that the divines of our church, who are better theists than to adopt so abominable a doctrine, are obliged to swear that they do, when they subscribe the thirty-nine articles. Whether St. Paul intended to teach it is made to some persons, but I confess not to myself, doubtful: that St. Austin did, and that Christ did not teach it, is certain; and yet this doctrine is one of those, which theology has imposed for a christian doctrine, and by which the peace of the world has been disturbed in every age of the church. The truth is, that the church has been in every age a hydra, such a monster as the poets feign, with many heads. All these heads hissed and barked, and tore one another with fury. As fast as some were cut off, others sprouted out, and all the art, and all the violence employed to create an apparent, could never create a real uniformity. The scene of christianity has been al-

ways a scene of dissention, of hatred, of persecution, and of blood.

SECT. XXXI.

THIS the atheists object, and Christians cannot deny. It is necessary, therefore, in order to justify the christian religion from this reproach, that we proceed to show, by instances still stronger and more modern than those that have been already produced, how these disturbances, far from being the natural effects of religion, have proceeded solely from the constitution of the christian church, by which the peace of the world was laid, in the first ages of christianity, and still lies at the mercy of an order of men, who indulge their passions, and find their account several ways in disturbing it. We have proved, by undeniable evidence, that the whole body of the clergy, some few good and learned, but not infallible men, excepted, was ignorant, contentious, and profligate; and that councils were riotous assemblies, governed by intrigue, and celebrated with noise, confusion, and the greatest indecency. This was the state of the church in the fourth century: and it did not grow better, if it could not grow worse, afterward. On the contrary, as learning and knowledge decreased in the latter empire, the impositions of ecclesiastical authority grew up to such a height, and were so confirmed in the course of nine centuries at least, that when learning revived, though they

they were detected, they could not be exploded. A christian church, for I use the word here in the improper but common acceptation of it, having been established in the empire by Constantine, as well as the christian religion, and both of them being supposed to have the same divine original, the power and discipline of one became as independent of the civil authority, as the doctrines of the other. According to this system, the clergy did not compose, in the empire, nor out of it, wherever they were admitted, an order belonging to the state that admitted them; nor incorporated with it, as a member of the same body, independent on it as a subject. But they composed, more properly, an order distinct from it, the member of another body, the subject of another state. Churchmen were busy and troublesome inmates, in every family where they were received. They lived at the expense of it, they acquired government in it, and they had often an interest contrary to it. This was the case while the empire continued entire. The authority of the empire extended itself over many provinces and different states. So did that of the church. Even the conquerors of one were conquered by the other. Thus it happened in the West, if not in the East, and the Goths christianised, if the Saracens did not. When the empire was broken to pieces, the church remained entire, and the same ecclesiastical authority and discipline subsisted, where the same imperial authority and government were no longer acknowledged.

But it is necessary I should show you, in some particulars, the truth of what is advanced, in general.——While the Christians were a sect in the empire, they had private judicatures of their own, and they avoided the pagan tribunals, not only because they might think that it was below the dignity of saints to submit to be tried by them, but chiefly because it was prudent to conceal from unbelievers that, Christians went to law with Christians, and that notwithstanding the sanctity of their profession, the greatest crimes, even that of incest, were practised among them. That these were their reasons, is plain, from what St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, in the fifth and sixth chapters of his first Epistle. Though absent in body, yet present with them in spirit, he judges the incestuous man, and delivers him over to Satan. Neither he, nor they, had any right to judge those who were out of the church. But they had a right to judge those who were in it, or they pretended to have it. Incest might have been punished by a pagan judge. But the incest of a Christian was to be punished by Christians, as far as they could punish, by excommunicating, and delivering over to the Devil; but even thus, in order to the salvation of the criminal; that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus, though the flesh be destroyed. St. Paul asks, "dare any of you, having a matter against ano-"ther, go to law before the unjust, that is, the "Heathens, and not before the saints, that is, "your fellow Christians? Do you not know, that

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"the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not, "that we shall judge angels?" After which, the apostle directs such as have any controversy together, to take the meanest, or most contemptible Christian for their judge, rather than to go to the tribunals of the impious. I understand the passage, as Erasmus explains it, more agreeably to the drift of this whole argumentation than others. St. Austin, he says, gives it the same sense; but I wonder this judicious critick did not observe how absurdly the saint reasoned, when he thought he was obliged, by this passage, to take upon himself the judgment of causes, because he was a bishop*. The reasoning of St. Paul, however excellent in his time, could not be applicable in that of St. Austin. The empire was then become Christian. The saints were judged by saints, in the publick tribunals; and the apprehension of giving scandal to the heathen was a vain pretence, on many accounts.

The truth is, that there was in those days, what has been seen very often since, among the clergy, a sort of holy ambition, which proved as strong a motive in the hearts of good men transported by a mistaken zeal for the church, whose cause they confounded with the cause of religion, as that profane ambition, which meaned nothing more than to advance, under pious pretences, the grandeur, wealth, and dominion, of the religious, over

* Divus Augustinus, in libro de Opere Monachorum, ait sese ex hoc Pauli loco cogi ad suscipienda judicia causarum, quum esset episcopus.

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the civil society, was in the hearts of hypocrites and knaves. Innumerable such examples charity will incline us to believe that there have been, and without going farther than our own country, and the last age, such Laud seems to me to have been, an ambitious, tyrannical priest, but a pious man.

These two sorts of ambition helped one another mutually. Neither of them could have done so well alone: but both concurring, from very different motives, they soon established a church as independent on the state, as conjunctures well improved, and the characters of princes well managed, could make it. The emperors were mostly favourable to them, for one of these two reasons, and sometimes for both. As far as bigotry prevailed, they looked on the constitution of the church to be of the same divine original as the doctrines of it. They received the former on the faith of those from whom they received the latter. They had as good authority for one as for the other; and however the clergy might differ about points of doctrine, and some of discipline, the whole order agreed to inculcate the same respect for the hierarchy, or the holy principality, that is, for their own order. Christ had established his church on the model of the Jewish. The near correspondence of ecclesiastical polity, under both dispensations, showed a sameness of original; and the near correspondence of the terrestrial hierarchy, with that which had been imagined in Heaven, proved that it was divine. All

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this was showish. It passes now. It might well pass then. But yet, I think, there was another reason for favouring the church, which the emperors felt more sensibly.

The notion of a formal alliance between the church and the state, as between two independent distinct powers, is a very groundless and whimsical notion*. But a fraudulent, or silent, compact

* I have heard of a sermon preached by one Doctor Senior, a fellow of Trinity College, in Cambridge, before King Charles the Second, at Newmarket, in the days of passive obedience and non-resistance, and afterward printed. His text was taken from the 14, 15, and 16th verses of the 4th chapter of Exodus, or some of them, wherein God directs Moses to take Aaron, the Levite, because he knew that Aaron could speak well to the people, and join them together in commission, that they might assist one another, mutually; that Aaron might be instead of a mouth to Moses, and that Moses might be instead of God to Aaron. What other applications the good doctor made of these texts I know not. But I am informed by one[a], who has read the sermon, that he established on them a supposed alliance between the church and the state: or rather between the church and the king. By this alliance, the well spoken Levite was to instil passive obedience to the king into the minds of the people, and to insist on it, as on a law of God. The king, on the other hand, was to be the nursing father of the church, to support her authority, to preserve at least, if not increase, her immunities, and to keep her in the full possession of all the advantages she claimed. The church performed her part, and had a right, by virtue of this alliance, if the king did not perform

[a] Mr. Lewis, who was himself of Trinity College.

pact between princes and priests became very real, as soon as an ecclesiastical order was established. The emperors admitted and reverenced, or appeared to reverence the divine right of the

form his, to teach this doctrine no longer, and to resume her independency on the state, and on him. This was the purport of the sermon, at least: and Warburton took his hint, possibly, from it, and turned it to serve his purpose, that is, to lay down the same principles, and to banter mankind, if he could, by not drawing directly and avowedly from them the same conclusions. Doctor Senior's authority is, no doubt, as good in this case, as that of Demarca, or even of Bossuet. The first, a timeserving priest[a], interested, and a great flatterer, if ever there was one, and who made no scruple to explain away whatever he had found himself obliged to say in favour of the state. The latter was as wise, if not as cunning, as learned, and a much better man, though not so much in the favour of Mr. Warburton, who gave them characters, in his assuming style, without knowing any thing of them, and who has the impertinence to pronounce of the greatest scholar, the greatest divine, and the greatest orator of his age, that he was a good sensible man[b]. He was all I have said of him: but he was an ecclesiastick, and a subject of France,

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[a] When Demarca was made bishop of Conserans, and could not get his bulls dispatched, he explained away all he said to limit the papal power. He sent this book to Innocent the Xth, with a letter, whereby he retracted many things he had said, asked pardon for his errours, and promised for the future to support, with all his force, the prerogatives of the church of Rome. After this, he writ "De singulari Primatu Petri," to flatter the same pope.

[b] Vid. the last edition of the Alliance between Church and State Demonstrated.

clergy,

clergy. The clergy, in return, made use of their influence over consciences, to establish an opinion of a divine right in them. They were no longer deified after death, as they had been while the emperor was pagan; but they were made sacred during their lives; and as bishops ordained one another, and their subordinate priests, by the imposition of hands, so they ordained emperors and kings, by crowning them, and by anointing them with holy oil, which angels were sometimes employed to bring down from Heaven. As they made their own office, so they made that of emperors and kings, independent of human institution, and the divine appointment was signified, or rather conveyed, in both cases, by their ministry. By this alliance of the hierarchy and the monarchy, religion, that should support good government alone, was employed to support good or bad government alike, as it had been by St. Paul: and the worst of men, and the greatest usurpers and tyrants, were not only passively obeyed, but served and courted by the most eminent saints of the church, when no ecclesiastical interest prevailed to alter their conduct; for then the most fulsome panegyrists became the most virulent libellers, and they, who had preached submission, preached rebellion.

Such infractions of this alliance, or compact, happened sometimes; but in general it held: and a joint usurpation on the liberties of mankind was the effect of it. We have observed already, that Constantine meaned to govern the christian flocks by

every occasion. They were called and held, the general councils at least were so, by the imperial authority, and not by that of the patriarch of Rome, nor that of the patriarch of Constantinople, in the first ages after the establishment of christianity. They were composed, no doubt, much like those that have been above described, that is, very scandalously; and they would have decreed to little purpose, if their authority had stood alone. But that of the emperors bore them out. The emperors wanted only a pretence to force a uniform submission to some decision or other; and their authority was just sufficient for that purpose, in vulgar prejudice. Thus the allied powers, the hierarchy and the monarchy, have acted ever since. These farces were renewed in every age: in every age their consequences were more or less tragical; and this is the authority to which the christian world has been resigned in matters of religion.

SECT. XXXII.

THE religious society rose very fast, by such means as these, to great preeminence over the civil, in the empire, and to an influence over private consciences, that rendered their disputes, sometimes about trifling ceremonies, and sometimes about unintelligible speculations, a new source of dissension among mankind, unknown to the pagan world, and even greater than any of those

those that provoke the most barbarous nations to excesses of cruelty. But there were other means, which increased this preeminence and influence vastly, and enabled the church to do still greater mischief to the state. One of these means we may reckon to have been the improvement that was made in the hierarchical system. Christianity was a numerous sect before Constantine, or Constantine would have been a Christian no more than Licinius. But the same order, and the same polity, which were established afterward, could not be established either in particular churches, or in the church in general, while it was a sect. There was a sort of mixed government, aristocratical and democratical, in the churches, and some of these might correspond and convene together. But in the first case, there was not power sufficient to enforce subordination, nor facility, nor safety enough, in the second, while these churches were dispersed far and wide, under heathen governments. Presbyters, or elders, ruled the churches. They were all bishops, that is, overseers, alike, and coequal in rank and power, till factions arising, one presbyter was appointed by the apostles, or chosen by the faithful, to govern the rest, and was styled the bishop "eminentiæ gratiâ." Preeminence and subordination were established, for much the same reason, even among these superior presbyters or bishops. When metropolitans or archbishops began to be known in the church is not very certain. But I suppose it is certain, that the bishop of a church, established

in any metropolis, presided in every assembly over the other presbyters of the province, even before the reign of Constantine. Thus you see, that the democratical form of church government, which obtained in the days of the apostles, when every one was a teacher that would be so, and when they themselves had no other authority among the faithful, than that of first preachers of the Gospel, and first founders of churches, grew early to be aristocratical. You see, likewise, how early this form began to tend to the monarchical. It tended to it in every succeeding age, more and more. As Constantine changed the religion, he made great changes in the constitution of the empire, in the military order, and in the civil administration. He created new and higher offices in the state. So did the clergy in the church. He constituted vicars over the governors of provinces. So primates were raised above metropolitans. The præfecti prætorio had a rank above the vicars. So patriarchs had, whenever they got it, over primates. The ecclesiastical power rose up from a rough and broad basis, to the form of a pyramid; and if the last stone was not laid to crown the fabrick, it was attempted to be laid. In plain terms, if there had been an uninterrupted succession of popes, like Gregory the Seventh, during a century, the West might have seen, as well as the East, a whimsical, but real empire, founded on superstition. A reputed vicar of God, the pope, might have governed here as absolutely, as a reputed divinity, the dairo, did there.

But

But the fates of the dairo and the pope have been much alike. The former is deposed, confined, and still adored. The latter has been much degraded, if not deposed. His power is confined, if not his person; and though his thunder be heard no longer, he maintains the pageantry of an ecclesiastical Jupiter.

It may appear matter of wonder, that a body of men, as ignorant and as profligate as that of the clergy showed itself to be, as soon as it figured in the empire, should be able to assume, under pretence of religion, a power equally exorbitant in the exercise, and mischievous in the consequences. But our wonder will cease, if we consider another of the means that were employed to bring this about. Superstition took the place of religion, and faith of morality. To profess a belief of what no man understood, and to perform all the external duties which the church required, passed, in those days, and I apprehend they do so still, among many, for the sum of religion. The Athanasian Creed had little intention to make better men, and better citizens. The eight or nine creeds of the Arians had, probably, as little; and yet an assent to these creeds would have covered a multitude of sins, better than charity: and the vilest of men would have had a fairer chance for salvation, in either of these sects, for the merit of believing, than the most virtuous of men, out of it, for the merit of acting all their lives as such. A religion, which consisted in the profession of an implicit belief, and in the practice of certain ex-

ternal duties, was much more grateful to the generality of men, than a spiritual religion, that showed itself outwardly, by a strict practice of all the duties of publick and private morality. As soon, therefore, as theology and superstition had introduced such a religion in the place of original christianity, the one passed easily for the other; the inclinations of mankind helped the deception; the vices of the laity were indulged, the vices of the clergy were covered by it. The solemn manner, in which these men officiated, imposed on the vulgar of all ranks, who were seduced by the eye, and led by the ear. The very habits of bishops and priests contributed much to the same purposes, as St. Gregory of Nazianzen observes, in one of the discourses, to which I referred above. The venerable ephod, the cassock of Samuel, the humble walking staff, and those ornaments of the head that denoted virginity*.

But farther. Lest all this should not be sufficient to keep up the false notions of religion, which could alone maintain a profligate clergy in the preeminence and authority they had usurped, another expedient was employed. It was of such a nature, that it might have been thought more proper to expose and aggravate, by the contrast it created, than to conceal and atone for the general turpitude of the clergy. But the promoters

* Cernimus venerandam ephodum, et Samuelis diploidem, scipionem humilem, capitis ornamenta virginibus peculiaria, &c.

of

of it knew what they did. They trusted to the absurdity of mankind, and they followed, with confidence and success, the example set them by the clergy of the most ancient nations. The order of the magi, for instance, was not less ambitious, nor more virtuous, probably, than they were: and the same might be presumed of other ecclesiastical orders, that had flourished in the East. But in all these orders, there had been particular men, and sects of men, who retired from the world, and dedicated themselves to lives of seeming sanctity and real austerity, by which they maintained a reverence for the grossest superstitions, and for the much larger part of the same ecclesiastical body, who remained in the world, and were not exempt from the corruptions of it. Pythagoras had imitated these institutions; and the Jews, who had borrowed much from the Greeks after Alexander's expedition had brought them acquainted, seemed to have copied in the same instance after him. If the Sadducees might be said to resemble the Epicureans, and the Pharisees the Stoicians, sure I am, that a nearer resemblance might be found between the Essenes and the disciples of Pythagoras, who were behind the curtain, and who lived in community. The Essenes confined themselves to Palestine; but the Therapeutæ were a sort of Hellenist Essenes, who dispersed themselves, as the Christians had done, into Greece, and other countries, but principally into Egypt; for which reason, one of the names was better known to Josephus, and the other to Philo.

Nothing can be more admirable than the sanctity and austerity of this sect, whether appearing in the world or hid in their solitudes. Eusebius, whom an improbability seldom stopped, would have made Christians of them; as several ancient and modern divines have endeavoured to do, after him, but to no purpose. Christianity was little spread, scarce known, and scarce distinguished from Judaism, when Philo gave an account of this sect. But this sect had been long in fulness of fame, before it was imitated by Christians; for it had been so even before christianity.

The Decian, and other persecutions first, religious melancholy, and even a desire of fame afterward, might carry many Christians to lead an anchoretic life, as Paul and Antony did in the deserts of Egypt, about whom Athanasius and Jerom have published so many stupid lies. The cenobitic life began much about their time; for it was in the fourth century that Basil instituted this order. But this institution did not come into great vogue, till the want of it was more felt in the very beginning of the sixth century. It was then, that Benedict founded his order in Italy, from which so many sprouted up, like the suckers of a great tree. Monastick institutions multiplied in every age, in the West particularly; for they grew more and more necessary, in every age, to the church, as the ecclesiastical order, in general, gave more and more scandal, and as the usurpations of the Roman pontiffs, who made great advances toward a spiritual monarchy, increased. Enthusiasm,

sism, abetted and conducted by the policy of the church, was a principal motive to such establishments; and, indeed, no other motive could have filled these numerous societies. The fervour in every one was great, at first: and they renewed, in the opinion of mankind, that simplicity, that innocence, that zeal, and that devout austerity, by which primitive Christians were supposed to have distinguished themselves. But this fervour soon grew cool, and luxury, and vices of all kinds, as prevalent in these religious societies, as in any other parts of the christian church. The expedient, however, that served to maintain ecclesiastical preeminence and authority, did not fail for this. The secular clergy had been provided for amply, that they might have the means and encouragements necessary to make them answer the ends of their institution, and that no excuse might be left them for neglecting these ends. But when they turned into scandal what was designed for edification, and forfeited, therefore, their right to all they enjoyed by the beneficence of the faithful; when they should have been reformed, or their revenues should have been given to others, instead of this, they kept their possessions, though they broke their conventions with the publick, and the publick were at the expense of enriching another clergy. Just so again, and as fast as this other clergy grew corrupt, nothing was taken from them; but new orders, of the same kind, were founded to screen them and the secular clergy both, or to atone for the iniquity of both: and

that eternal bubble, the laity, paid the whole immense and growing charge.

Thus have things continued to the present age: and the religious society, among Christians, has imitated successfully the policy of religious societies, that flourished above three thousand years ago in the Pagan world. You must not be surprised at this assertion. It is easy to show, that the vast variety of religions, which prevail in the world, are derived, ultimately, from a few general principles, common to all men, because they arise from the common fund of human nature: and that in consequence of this, many rites and ceremonies, many institutions and orders, must descend, sometimes with more, and sometimes with less affinity, to the latest posterity. They descend, like torrents of water, which are not the same to the sight nor taste, when the length of their course, the soils through which they have passed, and the mixture of other streams, have purified some, and rendered others more foul. But they descend from the same springs: and, like those mighty rivers, which preserve the freshness of their waters very far into the sea, they preserve much of their original character, as they roll along through the vast ocean of time. Turn your eyes, even at this day, to the East, you will discover rites, ceremonies, institutions, and orders of men, wherever the devastations of barbarous nations have not destroyed the people as well as the religions of countries, much like to those which prevailed in the same countries in the re-

remotest antiquity. The Bramins have a sort of allegorical polytheism; as I suppose that their predecessors the Brachmans had. They hold the preexistence and transmigration of souls; they abstain from flesh; they retain the notions of pollution and purification; they wash away sins in the waters of the Ganges; they pretend to abstract themselves from sense, and to contemplate the Supreme Being by intense meditation. The Brachmans were possibly a sect of Gymnosophists: and there are at this time Joghis and Faquirs in the East, who carry their austerity and penance to such surprising excess, that the Carthusian monks, or those of la Trappe, compared with them, may pass for sects of luxurious Sybarites. Should any of these reverend fathers hear it said, that they are descended from ancient, and outdone by modern idolaters, they would be extremely scandalised: and yet nothing is more true. It is as true, as it is to say, that they serve the same purposes.

While the eyes of mankind were dazzled by these appearances of sanctity, which some few of the religious society, who devoted themselves, without knowing that they did so, for the rest, held forth, the rest pursued the designs of their ambition with great art, and uninterrupted perseverance. They could not have been achieved with less of either; for even contrary systems were made to cooperate in promoting them; poverty and riches, humility and ostentation, the want and the excess of authority and power.

This

This I mean. The secular clergy not only screened themselves behind the apparent sanctity of the regular, which cast a lustre on the whole church; they not only imposed by the religious merit of others, but they accustomed the world by degrees to reverence them for the wealth and dignities they enjoyed, and for the pomp and magnificence with which they affected to appear. As the true spirit of religion decayed, and as that of superstition took its place, this was more easily brought about: and he, who imagined that he paid honour to a successor of the apostles, paid it in reality to the patriarch, the primate, or the metropolitan; dignities which ecclesiastical ambition had assumed, on the model of those which had been created in the state.

The eastern church rose by much the same means, but could never rise to the same power, as that of the West. Many reasons of this difference will occur to those, who are conversant in the history of the church, and in that of the latter empire. I shall insist on one, which was the principal, and in the consequences of which the western provinces were most concerned in those days, as they were alone concerned afterward. The reason is this. The opportunities of advancing early and successfully toward a monarchical form of government were much more favourable in the West than in the East. The patriarchs had a sort of tetrarchical, or ethnarchical authority, for I suppose it is not easy to distinguish them; and beside those ensigns of

honour,

honour, which primates and metropolitans affected to have as well as they, the patriarchs assumed one which had belonged to the emperors solely, and enjoyed it in common with them; that I mean of lights or fires carried in solemn pomp before them. From the institution of this dignity there were three patriarchs, the patriarchs of Rome, of Antioch, and of Alexandria. He of Rome remained alone in the West; but in the East two others were added, a patriarch of Constantinople, and last of all, a patriarch of Jerusalem. It is said, that the bishop of Rome, Leo the first, opposed strenuously the erection of this patriarchate. If he did so, although it was evidently an advantage to him, that the East should be divided into many patriarchates, while he alone was patriarch in the West, and might hope to be so of the West and the East too, we may venture to say, that he did not judge of his true interest as nicely as popes have done generally, and as it became him to do in particular, who was thought to join in his conduct the character of the fox, to the character, as well as name, of the lion.

Gregory the first, and the great, as he is called, saw the advantage of being sole patriarch in the West, while there were four bishops decorated with the same title in the East: and he resolved to improve it. If this rank had been given on a religious account, it ought to have been given surely, in the first place, to the bishop of Jerusalem; since christianity began there, and was propagated

propagated originally from thence; though other churches, those of Antioch, of Alexandria, and of Rome particularly, might seem to be coeval with it. But these were great cities, and had great dependencies, while Jerusalem lay in ashes, from which miserable state she never arose to her former grandeur, and while Byzantium was neither an imperial nor a christian city. The preeminence of bishops was determined, in some measure, by the preeminence of cities; so that when patriarchs were made, though these were, as bishops had been, equal in authority, and though their authority was confined to their patriarchates, and never, I believe, very well ascertained even in them; yet they might contend for a priority of rank among themselves, and he who held the first rank among them would hold it of course in the whole church. That the pope of Rome, which was the sole imperial city during the first three hundred years of the christian æra, should claim this priority, and that other patriarchs should acquiesce in it, cannot be thought extraordinary, if it should be thought true. They might allow him this primacy, for ought I know. But if they did, they gave him nothing more than a feather to adorn his mitre. Not only other patriarchs were styled by the same pompous titles that were given to him, but bishops too. Popes were contradicted, reproved, censured, even by these; and nothing can be more evident than this, that they reputed the Roman bishop to be, with regard to them, the first among equals,

"primus

"primus inter pares," only: that is, he was bishop of the first see, "primæ sedis," and had on that account a precedency, or nominal primacy. This indeed was little of itself, but it might lead to more. A seeming primacy might give one that was real: and as titles are often derived from powers, power might be derived in time from this empty title.

Thus the bishops of Rome, while they were only bishops, thought; and were, therefore, fond of a title, empty as it was, that could not be contested with them, nor was contested, till Constantinople was built, and the seat of the empire translated thither. Then it became disputable indeed which was the first see: and if the title of œcumenical patriarch, which began to steal into use, as most ecclesiastical usurpations have done, and as, I believe, this did, though Leo the first is said to have refused it, could have been obtained by him of Constantinople, all the advantages might have been lost to him of Rome, which he expected to reap with this title from his growing primacy. This Gregory the first saw, and he neglected nothing to prevent it. Well may it be said, that he neglected, and that he stuck at nothing to prevent it, when we consider the conduct he held towards Phocas. Mauritius was a good prince. Gregory the most fawning, the most canting, and the most ambitious of priests, had extolled his charity and his piety too even, when he beseeched the emperor to revoke an edict he had made, and which the good bishop had executed, however, in

the

the mean time. John, the patriarch of Constantinople, passed for a pious prelate, and was of such remarkable austerity, that he acquired the name of the Faster. Phocas was the most vicious and cruel of men. But John assumed the title of œcumenical patriarch: and Mauritius favoured his pretensions. These were irremissible crimes in both; while the merit of favouring the ambitious humility of Gregory, who affected to take no higher title than that of servant of the servants of God, was sufficient to make a Trajan of Phocas. This inhuman usurper, not content to put the empress, her three daughters, and almost all the relations and friends of Mauritius, to death, caused the five sons of his master to be murdered* in his presence, and under the eyes of their father; who was afterward stretched out on the bodies of these innocents, and made a sacrifice, on that bleeding altar, to the same unrelenting cruelty. This scene of horrour communicated none to Gregory. The revolution, however brought about, gave him, his see at least, the victory over his rival: and he thanked God, most impiously, for it. The three letters, which he wrote on this occasion to Phocas and Leontia, in all the prostitution of flattery, the solemn reception that he gave their images, which he placed in the oratory of the martyr Cæsarius, and the prayers which the senate and clergy offered up for the prosperity of these monsters, in a publick

* Maimb. Hist. du Pont. de St. Greg.

thanksgiving,

thanksgiving, by his direction, are monuments of the infamous methods by which it was thought lawful to promote the designs of ecclesiastical ambition. Gregory's design succeeded; for Phocas gave, though not to him, yet to his successors, the title he would not suffer the fasting prelate to assume. But Gregory's memory must be abhorred by every honest mind: and the impudence of your church, forgive the expression, in making this man a saint, nor the folly of many in ours who speak of him as such, cannot be atoned for by the modesty that has been shown in preferring scarce any other pope to the same rank since that time.

The Roman pontiffs had more opportunities, and therefore greater encouragement than any others, to promote these designs both at home and abroad. There were no patriarchs in the West to share with them the lustre of this dignity. In a few generations after Constantine, the empire of the West, which he had weakened, fell into ruins: and as there was no emperor in Italy after the deposition of Augustulus by Odoacer, so the remains of the imperial dignity in that country were not sufficient to overshadow theirs; especially after they founded their primacy no longer on the authority of an imperial rescript, but on a supposed divine institution. On the contrary, theirs increased as that of the emperors died away. Italy lay exposed to the invasion of barbarous nations. So did Gaul, and Britain, and the other provinces. Of all these misfortunes, the Roman

Roman pontiffs made their profit. The preeminence they had acquired, and much more their industry, their perseverance, and their skill, made them in some sort, and on several occasions, the protectors of Italy, and of Rome especially. About the middle of the fifth century, Attila took Aquilea, Pavia, and Milan, ravaged all the country we call Lombardy, and threatened even Rome. The bishop of this city went at the head of an embassy to him: and though the fabulous circumstances, that have been invented to give a miraculous appearance to the success of the legation, deserve our contempt; yet the legation had success in appearance; since Attila, for some reason or other, left Italy, and Rome was delivered from her fears. In the same pontificate, Genseric, the Vandal, surprised and took Rome at the solicitation of Eudoxia, who desired to revenge the death of one husband, and to get rid of another. The pope, Leo, had not the same success on this occasion as the former*. The Arian was not so complaisant as the pagan. Rome was pillaged fourteen days together. But some of the churches were saved, the town was not burned, nor the people put to the sword: and all that happened less than had been apprehended was imputed to the intercession of Leo.

The history of this fifth century, and of the three or four that follow, is extremely confused and dark: and yet we are able to discern a most

* Maimb. Hist. du Pont. de St. Leon.

surprising

surprising system of political conduct, founded on the same principles, and carried on through the whole time, till that spiritual tyranny, which had done so much mischief under an aristocratical form before, and has made such havock in the world since under the monarchical form, was fully established. I touch the subject lightly, but I must say something more upon it.

SECT. XXXIII.

The bishops of Rome had, beside the advantages they procured to themselves, and those that time and accidents put into their hands, one original advantage, which has been hinted at already, of the greatest importance to them at Rome, and every where else, from an habitual respect, that the subjects of the empire retained, and the conquerors of the western provinces contracted, for the ancient capital of the empire. It was natural for the Romans, when Rome became christian, to desire, that their bishop should represent the sovereign pontiff, who had resided among them while they were heathens. Laical vanity might, and ecclesiastical ambition could not fail to desire this. The consent of both made all the papal usurpations easy: and the people in general liked better a voluntary subjection, for such it was at first, to their bishops, than a forced subjection to prefects or any other imperial officers. The popes took the pomp and state of the pontifex maximus,

before they assumed the title: and the contests about their elections, bloody contests in the streets and in the churches too, showed what an object of ambition the bishoprick of Rome was, even before the destruction of the western empire. These pontiffs in truth derived their sovereignty more properly from Numa than from Christ: and pagan prejudices had some effect, even when the world was become christian, in creating a respect for them. The title of œcumenical bishop extended, and realised, in some instances, their claims. But the title of bishops of the eternal city helped the imposition. This imposition of the popes did not prevail much among the Arians, because of their opposition to Arianism; and therefore, as they persecuted this sect, wherever they had power to do it, they were obsequious enough to Arian princes, under whom they had not this power: an example whereof might be taken from the embassy of one of these popes, whose name I do not remember, and whom Theodorick sent to Justin to persuade that emperor to show more indulgence to the Arians in his dominions, lest the Gothick king should take reprisals on the orthodox in the West. But wherever orthodoxy prevailed, these titles procured a great regard to the see of Rome, and an influence which the popes improved directly and indirectly, to confirm their authority where it was acknowledged, and to propagate it, under the notion of conversions to christianity, where it was not acknowledged.

This

This calls to my mind the mission, that Gregory, the same I have spoken of already, sent into Britain. This example will show what that christianity was which the popes propagated; and how the grossest frauds, that iniquity ever invented, or impudence imposed, were established under that venerable name. Brunehault, queen of France, must pass for one of the worst women that ever lived, if the general consent of historians can establish a character. Gregory held an intimate correspondence with this woman: and this intimacy with her, and with Phocas, is such a brand on his memory, that we might be surprised to find his name in the calendar of your saints, if we did not find that of another Gregory, Gregory the seventh, there. Brunehault was extremely liberal to the ecclesiastical order. She built churches, founded convents, and had a great devotion to relicks. So much liberality, and so much superstition, might have made a saint even of her too, notwithstanding her crimes: and she might have stood over your altars in company with her panegyrist. This pious queen contributed not only to maintain the authority of the bishop of Rome in France, where it was respected already, but to propagate it, where it was not yet known; for it is plain, that the conversion of the Saxons to papal christianity was concerted with her. The more immediate instrument of this conversion indeed was Berthe, daughter of Charibert king of France, and wife of Ethelbert king of the south Saxons. She protected, she introduced the mis-

sionaries: and the king and his subjects were converted to the Roman religion.

I do not speak improperly, when I say the Roman religion: for although Gregory says, in a letter to Brunehault, only this, that "he heard "the church of England had a mind to become "christian*;" yet is it certain, that the Saxons had the knowledge of christianity, as it was taught in the first ages, before Austin and his monks came to preach it as it had been modelled, and, to speak plainly, corrupted in the church of Rome and the other christian churches. The Britons had been converted long before to the christian religion: and the Saxons had a knowledge of it from them. On this supposition we may account, and on any other it is impossible to account, for the obstinate adherence of the Saxons, after their supposed conversion by Austin, to the Asiatick and most ancient rule of celebrating Easter, which had been changed in the church of Rome, and which Austin opposed. The Britons had been driven into a remote corner of the world: and the Saxons were a greater barrier than the sea itself between them and the continent. They retained, therefore, their religion as they had received it, and knew nothing of the additions that had been made to it since the time of their conversion, nor particularly any thing of the Roman bishop's pretensions to a supremacy. As they

* Indicamus ad nos pervenisse, ecclesiam Anglicanam vellè fieri christianam. Lib. 5, ep. 59.

knew,

knew, so they might, and so I believe they did, teach the Saxons: and it was neither hard for one to teach, nor for the other to learn, christianity, in a simplicity that came nearer to that wherein Christ had taught it to the poor and the ignorant. But this was to be unlearned: and the sole object of Austin's mission was to teach both Britons and Saxons a newfangled christianity, and to inspire them with a foolish respect for superstitious usages, and with an abject submission to the see of Rome. That these were the points he laboured, appears from all we know of the conduct he held, from his disputes with the Britons, from the instructions he asked, and from those which the pope gave him. The height to which he carried his legatine power, and the insolence with which he treated the British bishops, demonstrate the spirit in which he came, and the purpose he came for. The declaration, that these bishops sent him, or the abbot of Bangor, by their direction, was modest but firm. They declared themselves subject to the church of God, and to the pope of Rome. But how? As they were to every godly Christian, &c. Other obedience than this, they say to Austin, that they do not know to be due to him whom he called pope: and that they were under the government of the bishop of Caerleon upon Uske, &c.

The Britons stood out against the usurpations of the popes many centuries. But the Saxons soon crouched under them. The Saxons were a fierce and a free, but they were an ignorant peo-

ple: and therefore false notions of christian institution were easily imposed upon them. From notions thus imposed, the clergy derived pretensions to such powers, such immunities, and such preeminence of rank and dignity, as raised the bishops to an equality with princes and kings in some respects, and to a superiority over them in as many as were, or could be made to seem relative to religion; for in these "omnibus dignitati-"bus præsunt" was a maxim, which they had the front to avow, and which the civil society were stupid enough to admit. What they pretended to belong to them, they assumed: and what they assumed they justified by canons, that is, by laws of their own making. The ecclesiastical Roman yoke was so well fixed on the neck of the Saxons, that it grew more and more confirmed, till the Normans came in, and then it did not become lighter; for they brought the same prejudices along with them*; so that our island was a province, and a farm, to the court of Rome near five hundred years longer. How easy soever it would be to descend into all these particulars, I should find it tedious: and you know that I never engaged to write treatises, nor any thing more than Essays; if my part in our occasional conversations, extended on paper, can deserve even that name. But since I mentioned the few false notions, concerning christian institution, that imposed on the Saxons, and since I think the

* See Bacon's Treatise, from Selden's Notes.

usurpations

usurpations of the religious society have been founded every where else on the same, I will endeavour to expose them to you in a few words, to show you how the first deception arose in the whole christian commonwealth, and how the monarchical tyranny of the bishop of Rome was grafted on it.

SECT. XXXIV.

I AM not a disciple of Hobbes, but I embrace truth wherever I find it, or whoever shows it to me: and he shows it to me, I think, when he maintains, that the present church of Christ, by which we mean in this place the whole body of Christians, is not the kingdom of Christ. This opinion, however, that it is so, grew early into belief, and will be supported as long as that order of men can support it, who have assumed, under pretence of being appointed to govern and administer in it, an establishment distinct from the civil, and a most unreasonable and unequal share of wealth and power in almost every christian state. No opinion, however, can be more evidently false. The express declaration which Christ made when he said, "my kingdom is not "of this world," the conduct he held, the doctrines he taught, and the commission he gave to his apostles, prove it to be so. If it had been the divine intention to establish, at that time, the kingdom of Christ, he would have appeared, no

doubt, more conformably to the expectations of the Jews, in majesty and power. But they mistook the sense of their prophecies, it seems; their expectations were vain, and the purposes of Infinite Wisdom opened themselves in a very different manner.

The Messiah showed himself to the world in the lowest form of life, and avoided all appearances of affecting any higher rank, even that of the Messiah, which was distinguished from that of king; though the Jews, misled by their prophecies, could not conceive the two characters to be distinguishable. He came not to reign, but to redeem; not to triumph, but to suffer; not to erect a kingdom, but to prepare men for that which was to be erected at his second coming. It may seem strange, that he could conceal himself, notwithstanding the signs and wonders that illustrated his birth, the proclamation of him from above at the time of his baptism, and all the miracles which he wrought, chiefly indeed out of Jerusalem, during the time of his ministry. But it is not strange, that he used all the means of keeping up this concealment of himself to the last, and in a great degree even from his disciples, on the hypothesis here mentioned. If he had declared himself publickly and plainly to be the Messiah, either the Jews would have taken him by force to make him king, as St. John tells us, that they who had seen his miracles were ready to do*; or they would have looked on him, from

* Reasonab. of Christian.

the

the first, as an impostor, since he pretended to be the Messiah, and yet assumed no dominion, nor claimed any kingdom. In one case, the design of his coming would have been entirely perverted. In the other, the Jews might have laid immediate hold on him, and have taken away his life. In neither, could he have had the means, nor the time necessary to perform all the purposes of his mission, and to fulfil all the prophecies according to his own applications of them.

To prevent these effects of the mistaken zeal of the Jews, and to keep himself in the state of an innocent man toward the Roman government, without being at the expense of more miracles for these purposes, according to Mr. Locke, his conduct was reserved and cautious, his language mystical and parabolical. But the repeated declarations he made, during the course of his mission, that his kingdom was not of this world, were sufficient to keep him from being obnoxious to the Romans: and though he owned himself to Pilate the king of a world to come, we see that Pilate found no fault in him, and that he declared him an innocent man, when he delivered him up to the Jews to be crucified. For what concern could Pilate or his master imagine they had in a world that was to come, in a future kingdom, in a kingdom of God, in a kingdom of Heaven? In this manner, one part of the Saviour's intentions was answered. His innocence was averred. But there was another part. He was not only to be innocent, he was to die innocent: and of this he made

made the Jews the instruments by a sequel of the most artful behaviour, which Mr. Locke developes with a sagacity that might give envy to the deepest divine, that ever undertook to discover the œconomy of Infinite Wisdom.

He contrived to appear guilty to the Jews, by the same declaration by which he appeared innocent to the Romans. He appeared a very extraordinary person to both: and well he might; but he spoke plainly to one as far as they were concerned, and darkly and ambiguously to the other. He pretended to no kingdom: Cæsar had no rival in him. But for this very reason, he became criminal to the Jews. The miracles he performed, the obscure expressions he let drop, induced some of the people to take him for the prophet that was to come, for the Messiah. But the Scribes, the Pharisees, and the bulk of the people, who hearkened, as he had bid them hearken, to those who sate in the seat of Moses, could not easily take him for the Messiah, consistently with their prejudices; since he assumed no kingdom, nor pretended to any. Nay more, they could not have taken him easily for the Messiah, if they had been able to distinguish between the Messiah and the king; since he disguised one of these characters, as he disowned the other. This extraordinary person, therefore, was, according to their logick, an impostor. They were a rejected people, for not believing him to be the Messiah, on the faith of his miracles: and he kept them in this errour. At least he did nothing to draw them out

of

of it, that they might bring him to the cross, when his time should be come, and complete the redemption of mankind, without knowing what they did, but at their own expense.

He passed for a Galilean, though he was born at Bethlehem, by which one proof of his being the Messiah was suppressed. Even his precursor, he who had baptised him, he who had been a witness when he baptised him of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, and had heard a voice from Heaven declare, "this is my beloved Son in "whom I am well pleased;" which voice, therefore, must have been the voice of God the Father; even he did not know certainly, that the Son of God was the Messiah. When John was in prison, he sent to ask Jesus, so little did he know him to be the Messiah, "art thou he that "should come, or do we expect another?" The answer Jesus made was an appeal to his miracles, which proved him to be a very extraordinary person indeed, but which did not prove him in those days, and ad homines, to be the Messiah; for a belief of the powers of magick was not as ridiculous then as it is now, and the Pharisees had prepared the people to believe these very miracles wrought by Beelzebub. The answers he gave on other occasions were not less equivocal, nor the language he held about himself at any time more explicit, than that wherein he declares himself the light of the world as long as he is in the world. He was so apprehensive of being taken for the Messiah, lest he should be taken for a king too, that

that he scarce owned himself even to his disciples, and that he commanded the devils, who proclaimed him to be so when he cast them out, to say nothing of it. If he declared himself more openly, just before his death, to be the Messiah, he claimed to the last no actual kingdom, no kingdom of this world, neither before his death nor after it, till he should come again in the glory of his Father, with his angels, to judge the world, and to render to every man according to his works.

The resurrection, the ascension of Christ, and the coming of the Paraclete or Comforter, who was to show the disciples all things, and bring to their remembrance all things which he had said, made them understand more clearly and believe more firmly, that he was the Messiah and the king. The prophets had spoken of him under both these characters confusedly: and the Jews had been led, by these prophecies and by their partial interpretations of them, to imagine not only, that the Messiah and the king were to be one and the same person, in which they did not deceive themselves, but that all the glorious things, which had been foretold of him, were to happen at once, and as soon as he should appear, in which they flattered and deceived themselves very fatally. The disciples saw now, what they had not seen fully and clearly before. They saw, that the two characters, and the offices belonging to each, were to be distinguished. They saw, that their master had already appeared in one, and had performed

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and suffered all that belonged to it. They believed, therefore, that he would soon appear in the other, as he gave them reason to expect he would, according to their apprehensions; that his kingdom, for the coming of which he had taught them to pray, would then come; and that when he was seated in the throne of his glory, his immediate disciples should also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. He redeemed mankind at his first coming, and taught and exhorted them to prepare for his second, when they, who have believed in him, are to enjoy a glorious immortality. Then, and not till then, his kingdom will begin, properly and truly called so. The intermediate time is a time of regeneration and preparation. Divines talk of a kingdom of grace, but the expression is figurative, and apt to convey a false idea. The kingdom of glory alone is Christ's kingdom. He instituted none that was to precede it. He exercised no dominion, no coercive power, nor delegated any to be exercised by others.

If any such had been delegated by him, it would have been so, doubtless, to his immediate disciples the apostles, and to the seventy *. But when we examine the commission, we find nothing of this kind in it. They were commissioned to teach or to preach to all nations, or, perhaps, to the

* N. B. I say the seventy both here and elsewhere, in conformity to the general run of orthodox opinion, though I know that we have no authority, but that of St. Luke, for assuming this distinct number of disciples.

lost

lost sheep of Israel dispersed into all nations, that Jesus was the Messiah. They were authorised to say, after their master, that his kingdom would come, that it was at hand, that they who received them, and the Gospel they taught, would be received into it, and that the state of those cities, who received them not, would be in that day, the day when the kingdom of Christ should come, less tolerable than that of Sodom. They were to baptise such as believed: and this baptism or washing was made a sign of regeneration, and admission into the church of Christ here, in order to admission into his kingdom hereafter. Christ gave his apostles another power, which seems to be consequential to that of baptising, and therefore connected with it, the power of remitting or retaining sins. Though I do not pretend to dogmatise about the nature and extent of this power, yet I may pretend to say what it is not, and to what it does not extend. It is not a power to forgive or not to forgive, to cancel or not to cancel, sins, absolutely and definitively. Such a power belongs to the great Searcher of Hearts alone. The apostles might admit those, who professed their belief in Christ by baptism, into the church, and retain them in it as long as they held the same faith, and brought forth fruits meet for repentance. They not only might, but it was their duty to do so, and St. John censures very severely Diotrephes, in his third Epistle, for a contrary practice. If he who had offended on any occasion appeared to be penitent, he might

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be absolved, that is, his sins were remitted, and he was retained in the christian church. If he was impenitent, he could not be absolved; his sins were retained, and he was to the brethren as a heathen man and a publican. In these cases, as in that of baptism, the apostles and their successors were merely ministers, who performed a ceremony, or pronounced a judgment. They could not refuse baptism to believers: and it was not they, but the church, the congregation of the faithful properly, who retained an offender in their body by remitting his sins, or drove him out by retaining them; that is, by refusing to remit them; for which asssertion we have the authority of Christ, in the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, and that of St. Paul's example in his proceeding with regard to the fornicator in the church of Corinth.

This power, which Christ gave to his disciples and to his church, was so far from being a coercive power, such a power as kings delegate, and those who govern under them exercise, such a power, in short, as may serve to show that he meaned to establish any kingdom in this world, that it shows the very contrary. "Whosesoever "sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and "whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Again "whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth shall "be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever ye shall "loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven." These expressions, taken together, point at the other world, the world to come; and the full effect of the

the promises and threatenings they contain is to be expected there, not here. In this intermediate state of preparation and probation, all that they, who are appointed ministers of the Gospel, as such can do, by virtue of the power delegated by the first passage, is to advise, exhort, admonish, and to separate themselves, and to persuade the faithful to separate, from the impenitent and refractory. This is all the power which the first of these passages gives. The second gives no farther power, but it contains a promise which must not be understood according to the natural import of the words, nor without very great mitigations of the sense; lest it should be understood to imply such an absurdity as it would be impious to impute to the Word of God, how desirous soever divines may be to have it so understood. It would imply that Christ, when he comes at the last day in the glory of his Father, and to establish his kingdom, will not come to judge the world, or the christian part of it at least, but merely to execute judgments already given, the judgments of the church. In short, Christ gave no coercive power to his apostles: and they who succeeded them exercised none, till they obtained it, or stole it, from the kings whose kingdoms were of this world. Then, indeed, excommunications grew coercive, and severely so: and powers that were tyrannical in their execution, and civil in their origin, began to pass for ecclesiastical and lawful powers, in the hands of men who had no right by their institution to any that are

coercive

coercive or penal. But if that were true, which is evidently false, that Christ had given such powers to his apostles, as their successors claim and exercise too, wherever they are suffered to do so, yet there would be no reason to allow this claim now, nor was there any to allow it even in the primitive ages of christianity. Christ breathed on his apostles, bid them receive the Holy Ghost, and we are bound to believe that he inspired the same spirit into them by this act, which descended afterward more manifestly upon them and the disciples under the figure of fiery tongues. The gifts of the spirit were then common, and evidenced themselves by sanctity of life, and by many other unequivocal signs. But these signs, sanctity of life and miraculous operations, soon failed. Priests after that might blow on other priests, lay their hands on them, and bid them receive the Holy Ghost. But it was silly and impious both to persuade the civil society of Christians, that such priests, as these were generally, could either give or be worthy to receive the Holy Ghost. This they did however, and it was necessary to carry on this illusion, that they might carry on the other. As soon as they had persuaded, that the church of Christ was the kingdom of Christ, and that this order of men was appointed to govern in it, there was a necessity of persuading likewise, that the same spirit, the same gifts and graces, which Christ had bestowed on the apostles for the establishment of his

church, were conveyed down for the government of it by their order.

If we had less experience of the powerful effects of ambition, avarice, and superstition, we might be surprised that some men have been hardy enough to assert, and others weak enough to believe, against the express declarations of Christ himself, that his kingdom is of this world, and that it began immediately after his first coming; though he fixed the commencement of it at his second coming; the time of which he left uncertain. There are many dark passages in the Gospels, and when there are no others relative to any particular subject, the presumption of theology has a full scope. But when there are passages, the sense of which is determined and plain, these are to guide us to the sense of those that are ambiguous and obscure. To take a contrary method, to explain and pretend to fix the sense of what is clear by what is dark, may be called subtilty and deep penetration; but sure I am it deserves to be called absurd and impudent imposition. This now is the very thing that has been done in the case before us. Divines of all ages, all countries and sects have done it. They do it still: and Beza and Bellarmine, who agreed in nothing else, agreed in this.

I mention Beza particularly, because he inferred, as I learn from Hobbes, that the commencement of the kingdom of God should be placed at the resurrection of Christ, from a passage

sage in the Gospel of Mark. In that, the words Jesus is recorded to have spoken are these: "Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them "who stand here, which shall not taste of death, "till they have seen the kingdom of God come "with power." These words, like those which he spoke of St. John to St. Peter, "if I will that "he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" are very dark indeed. They plainly relate to his second coming, which is characterised by coming with power. But then it will follow, that the persons spoken of are still alive; which might have passed among the good people of Ephesus, who believed, in St. Austin's time, that St. John was still alive, and only slept in his grave: and would not pass, I presume, in these days. Shall we accept the conjecture of Hobbes? He thinks, that the words related to the transfiguration, of which Peter, and James, and John, some, not all, who stood by Jesus when he spoke them, were witnesses. He thinks, that these disciples, having seen Christ in glory and majesty, as he is to appear at his second coming, the promise was accomplished by way of vision. But this is conjecture only, and, though ingenious, yet forced and certainly not serious; for if these disciples did see him, they saw him in a vision, and they neither saw him come, nor the kingdom of God come, in any propriety of speech. There might be a more probable account given, perhaps, why these words were spoken according to the natural

and obvious sense of them. But I use none of the theological liberties of guess with Holy Writ, and I content myself to observe on this occasion the absurdity of that of Beza. Hobbes takes notice justly, that if the kingdom of God was to come, and did come at the resurrection, the expression was not exact, since all the disciples, not some only, lived till Christ was risen from the dead. But the absurdity of this interpretation is greater still. The ascension followed soon the resurrection. Between these two events, Christ assumed no more dominion than he had done before, nor showed any more signs of claiming or exercising kingly power. He scarce showed himself to the few, who were said to have seen him, in such a manner as they could know by it, certainly, that it was he whom they had seen. I say the few, because St. Paul, who had not probably ever seen Jesus, deserves no credit when he affirms, against the whole tenour of the Gospels, that he and above five hundred brethren at once had seen him after his resurrection. Both these events, the resurrection and ascension, passed in a very private manner. There were no eye witnesses, properly called so, of his resurrection. There were few, of his ascension. But in whatever manner we can suppose them to have passed, if we suppose him to have risen from the dead, and to have ascended into Heaven, with the same publick pomp and majesty with which he is to be attended when he shall come to judge the world,

world, and to establish the kingdom he foretold, yet we cannot assert, that this kingdom came, or began at that time. As God, he reigns eternally; but the kingdom here spoken of was to have a beginning, and to say that it began when Christ, who had not then established it, returned to reign with his father in the unity of the godhead; or that it came, though we continue still to pray that it may come, when Christ left the Earth, or that he vested the apostles, or those who call themselves their successors, with a sovereignty in this imaginary kingdom, which he never assumed himself, is one of those paradoxes, which men, who find a colour for any in the dark sayings of the Scriptures, presume to advance.

Many other paradoxes have been built on this, the common foundation of all ecclesiastical power: and it has happened in the course of these usurpations, as it has happened often in the course of others. While the whole body of the clergy pursued, on one general maxim, an interest of ambition common to the whole body, particular members invented other paradoxes, which seemed to arise out of the first, and which became maxims just as true as the first. Thus, that I may say in a few words what I mean to say, and not to descend into a long detail of particulars, ecclesiastical as well as civil democracies became aristocracies; aristocracies became monarchies, and several monarchies were united into one empire, under those great conquerors, the bishops

of Rome. The christian church bore some resemblance, after the establishment of it, to the state of ancient Greece. Both were composed of several little governments. They were all Greeks in one, and all Christians in the other; but the quarrels of parties, in each of these, as well as the quarrels of one government with another, destroyed the publick peace, and continued to do so, notwithstandnig all the judgments of the Areopagus and all the decrees of councils. The feuds that arose in particular churches gave occasion or pretence to the institution of bishops: and those that arose between church and church, to the institution of metropolitans, primates, and patriarchs, one of whom pretended at last to be the vicar of Christ in his imaginary kingdom. In short, the clergy, like other usurpers, in order to maintain the advantages they had gained over the laity, or to carry their arms abroad in search of more, have found it necessary to submit to usurpations within their own body, and to groan under the very yoke they imposed.

Every innovation has been supported by some new paradox: and divine right has been claimed by all, on that fundamental paradox, in which they all agree. Marchmont will tell you, that presbytery is jure divino. I shall tell you, that episcopacy is so: and though you are not a very good papist, you will tell us, that popery is so. Let us be candid; and confess that none of them are so. To set an example of candour, I will own, that

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as monstrous as the papal pretensions are, against which we Protestants exclaim so loudly, they may be supported, by wresting and torturing the Scriptures, just as well as the principles in which we agree, that the christian church is actually the kingdom of Christ, and that a religious society was instituted to govern in it by his authority. These principles are laid in direct opposition to the plainest and most positive declarations which the Saviour made. But when they are once admitted, Bellarmine and the other writers for the church and court of Rome are able to defend their monstrous pretensions so plausibly to well-disposed minds, that instead of contradicting the Scriptures, they seem to build upon them, not only on passages in the Epistles of St. Paul, who boasted that he was the architect of the spiritual house, and that he laid the foundations of it, but on the words of Christ, as they stand in some passages of the Gospels, and to make their work the more sure, as they imagine absurdly enough, on passages of the Old Testament as well as of the New. Thus they prove the popes, as successors of St. Peter, to be vicars of Christ, to be infallible in all their judgments concerning faith and manners, and to have the supreme spiritual and even temporal power in every christian country. Such are the real pretensions of your church over all civil power, over all emperors, kings and princes. Such saints as your angelical doctor, such writers as Bellarmine and Baronius have affirmed them.

Councils have held the same language: and all they, who would take the temporal sword out of the hands of St. Peter, have been branded with heresy, the heresy of the politicks, "hæresis po-"liticorum." True it is, that some of your doctors, and even some councils have seen the folly, and blushed at the impudence of those who have carried these pretensions in favour of the papal authority so high. Many have writ against them, even in Italy: but both sides have concurred in giving to the church, understanding by the church the ecclesiastical order alone, a full and independent power over the state in spirituals; by which they saw, that they might preserve indirectly a tyranny they could not obtain directly.

SECT. XXXV.

From the time of Constantine to that of Charles the Great, the wealth and power of the church had grown from age to age, by such means as have been already mentioned: and the authority of that of Rome particularly began to overtop all others, by a stupid bigotry, that increased as ignorance increased, and by the artifices which her bishops employed. But Charles the Great raised these bishops to that exorbitant power and grandeur, which enabled them to vex and oppress some of his own successors, and to tyrannize the whole western world: till in the reign of another Charles, several nations shook this yoke off their necks,

necks, and made it sit lighter on the necks of those who did not shake it off. When the Lombards had settled themselves in Italy, the popes began to play a game, which they could not play with the same advantage for many reasons in the reigns of the Gothick kings. They fomented continual quarrels between the exarchs, who governed for the Constantinopolitan emperors, and the Lombards, in order to make their profit of them against both: and when they had drawn themselves into distress and danger, their refuge for protection was to France. They apprehended less the emperors, whose government was weak and oppressive, despised therefore and hated, and who were at a greater distance from Italy, and careless enough about it. They excommunicated the exarchs, and, in the dispute about image-breaking, the emperor himself. Gregory the second and the third took advantage of this pretended heresy, and in their zeal for images, which suited the humour of the times and the prejudices of the people, the first of these popes took upon him to forbid not only in his own diocese, but every where else, that the orders of Leo the Isaurian should be obeyed: and the second excommunicated him, and absolved his subjects from their allegiance to him. Usurpation was soon added to revolt, and the people of Rome were made to swear allegiance to the popes. Charles Martel had abetted these ambitious and turbulent prelates against the emperor: and, when they were in danger from the Lombards, he saved them by

by the influence he had on Luitprand. But Charles Martel dead, Ravenna taken, and the exarchate conquered, they lay at the mercy of this people, who knew their double dealing, and had sufficient reason to complain of the conduct they had in the revolt of Thrasimond duke of Spoletto, and on other occasions. This might have defeated all their designs; and the power they had acquired might have been crushed under that of the Lombards, if they had not improved very dexterously a singular conjuncture to ruin the Lombards in their turn, and to finish on these ruins that stately edifice of spiritual and temporal grandeur, which they had advanced very far on those of their ancient masters the emperors.

When Pepin the short resolved to take the title, as he had the power, of king of the Franks, he thought it necessary, not only to remove all scruples from the minds of his people, who might esteem themselves bound by their oaths to Childerick and the Merovingian race, but to justify his new title to other christian nations. He might have done the first, perhaps, by some solemn farce, which his own clergy would have been ready enough to act. But to do both more effectually, he chose to have the farce acted at Rome. He sent his messengers to question the oracle: and Zachary gave the best reason, that ever pope or oracle gave, for the sentence he pronounced. He pronounced, that the French were no longer bound by their oaths to Childerick; since this prince had not kept his engagement to them.

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The reason followed the sentence; for "such is "the nature of conditional contracts," said Zachary, "that if one party fails, the other is ab- "solved from his promise *." This answer had a full effect. Pepin was chosen king, and Childerick deposed unanimously in the national assembly that was held at Soissons.

If his holiness was not paid before hand, as ancient oracles were most commonly, Zachary foresaw, that the time of payment would soon come, and he took the best method to secure it. He was at peace with the Lombards when he solved this famous case of conscience in favour of Pepin; but as soon as they had conquered Ravenna and the Pentapolis, for Italy had a Pentapolis too, Astolphus their king determined, that the popes, who had been subject to the emperors, should be subject to him. The good men, who had revolted from their ancient master, did not care to submit to a new power, the seat of which was in Italy, and which would be always at hand to keep them in awe, to control and to punish them. Stephen the third was not ashamed to apply for help to Constantine, the son of that very Leo, who had been treated so insolently by the two Gregories. But the emperor having as little concern for the church and the people of Rome as they deserved from him, Stephen did at last, what Zachary, more able than he, would have done at first; he

* Mezeray.

had

had recourse to Pepin. He was received in France with more than respect, with a ridiculous, and yet in those circumstances a wise appearance of veneration; if it be true, that Pepin and his sons threw themselves at the feet of the priest to receive his blessing. He conjured them, in ecclesiastical cant, to defend the church of Rome, and the sepulchres of the apostles, that is, the dominion and sovereignty which the popes had usurped, against the Lombards. The Lombards were Christians, and meaned no hurt to the religion they professed. But the cause of the clergy and the cause of religion were made, by the logick of those times, as well as of ours, the same, when they were quite distinct, and even when they were opposite. Pepin was glad to seize an opportunity of satisfying, at once, his own ambition and that of the Roman bishops. Stephen anointed him, his wife, and his children; declared them, after this holy unction, princes by the grace of God; thundered out excommunications against all persons, subjects or strangers, who should oppose them in any time to come, and confined Childerick on the same day to a monastery, as he confined the children of Carloman, Pepin's brother. Pepin made two expeditions into Italy, reduced the Lombards, usurped on them the exarchate they had usurped on the Greeks, and gave it to St. Peter: such was the style.

Charles made several of these expeditions, and in them an absolute conquest of the Lombards. He confirmed what his father had done, and did still

still more for the church. He gave the exarchate and the five cities to the Roman see most certainly; but it is as certain, that he did not make an absolute alienation of them, without any reserve of sovereignty over the pope and them. His grant of Mantua, of Parma, of the two Sicilies, and of other dominions, is a mere supposition, and as ill founded as the pretended donation of Constantine to Sylvester and the bishops of Rome. If this has succeeded a little more to their advantage than the other, one reason of this success may be found, I think, in the passages of the time we speak of here. Whatever pope forged the donation of Constantine, I incline to think, that it was forged long before the tenth century, and that it lay dormant, among other records as authentick as itself, till an opportunity of employing it to some pious use was found. Thus it might be employed as an inducement to Pepin to make, and as a justification of him for making, a grant of the exarchate to the see of Rome, without any regard to the rightful claim of the Greek emperor: and in this sense I choose to understand those who have called this grant a restitution, as if Pepin, when he seemed to give, did only compound with the popes, who had as good a right as forgery could communicate to the whole western empire.

In this pretended act, Constantine is made to declare his intention to be not only, that the see of Rome should have the supremacy over those of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantinople;

stantinople; but that the pontifical throne should be exalted gloriously above the imperial*. He is made to give the palace of Lateran, his diadem, and all his imperial ornaments, to Sylvester and the popes his successors. He is made to constitute the inferior clergy, "Romanæ ecclesiæ servientes," in the ranks of patricians and consuls. In short, he is made to say in express terms, that he yields and abandons to Sylvester, the universal pope, and the pontiffs his successors, the city of Rome and the provinces, places, and towns of Italy, or the occidental regions†: and that for this reason he thinks it "congruum," proper, to transfer his empire into the East; since it is not just, that an earthly emperour should reign where the prince of priests, and the head of the christian religion, is established by the emperour of Heaven‡.

I have quoted this extraordinary piece a little the more at large, because it has been avowed genuine by the court of Rome, and has been published as such by one of the Leos; for which reason it may stand very properly here as an instance of the most impudent forgery, which the religious

* Amplius quàm nostrum imperium terrenumque thronum sedem sacratissimam B. Petri gloriosè exaltare.

† Contradentes et relinquentes universali papæ Romanam urbem, et omnes Italiæ seu occidentalium regionum provincias, loca, et civitates.

‡ Quoniam ubi principatus sacerdotum et christianæ religionis caput ab imperatore cœlesti constitutum est, justum non est ut illic terrenus imperator habeat potestatem.

society

society ever attempted to impose on the civil, and may render all that remains to be said of these forgeries and usurpations the more probable. I know that Baronius gives it up, and would fain persuade mankind, that this act was forged by the Greeks to cast a reproach on the Roman church. I know too, that he gives up the decretal Epistles, and I do not suppose, that there is any man who would have the front at this time to defend either. But these candid acknowledgments come too late, to save the honour of Rome. Her advocates defended both, as long as they could impose on ignorant ages. Nay, they attempted it even after the resurrection of letters. When these impositions could pass no longer, and when they had done the work they were designed to do, they were abandoned, as many other forged acts and false traditions have been. But are men, who confess perjury when they are convicted of it, to be received as good witnesses in any case? I think not, and therefore I insist, that the forgery of the donation, as well as that of the decretals, since these have been mentioned too, may stand as proofs of the little credit we ought to give to any of those, that are brought in justification of the papal pretensions to temporal or spiritual rights.

These rights have in truth no better foundation than the compact I have mentioned between princes and priests. It began under Constantine, but it never appeared so grossly as under Pepin and Charles the Great. On which occasion it may be worth while to observe how much a worse bargain Constantine

Constantine made with the church, than the others made with the pope. What Constantine gave was immediate and real. The returns he had to expect were future, and such as never answered his expectations, either in promoting the grandeur, or in securing the peace of the empire. The emperor was the bubble of this bargain. That which Pepin and Charles the Great made with the church, already established and powerful, was better, and in some degree the reverse of the other. Their advantages in this alliance were immediate, as well as those of the pope: and who should improve them most was left to the skill and management of their successors. In the mean while, if they could not cheat one another, they bantered the rest of the world egregiously. The pope gave the title of king to Pepin, and that of emperor to Charles. These princes gave temporal dominion to the pope, and raised the opinion of his spiritual dignity and authority, as high as the examples they affected to give of reverence and submission could raise it. Thus, by fortifying his usurpations, they strengthened their own: and while we admire the conquests, whereby Charles extended his empire and that of the pope together, it is impossible not to laugh when we figure to ourselves the two usurpers kneeling to one another, the emperor asking the blessing of a man he made head of the church, the pope acknowledging the imperial sovereignty in a man he made head of the empire, and each bestowing most generously what neither of them had any right to give.

As

As these alliances were made on principles of human policy, and dictated by private interest alone, they were kept accordingly. Charles the Great seemed to foresee, that the alliance he had made would not be very well observed, and that the church would find means to transgress, instead of keeping within the bounds of it. He had received his crown from the pope; but he was so afraid that future popes might claim from this precedent, strained to their purpose, a right to give it, that he would not suffer any prelate to set it on the head of his son, who was elected and crowned in his presence at Aix. He ordered Lewis to take it from the altar, and to crown himself. But Lewis profited ill of this lesson. Even in his reign, the popes, who felt their strength, began to improve every opportunity of extending their prerogatives by encroachments on those that belonged to the emperors. Thus, for instance, a Leo presumed, under the pretence of a conspiracy against himself, to condemn capitally some persons without the imperial authority. The matter was examined, but the pope was not censured; he was rather screened by the imperial court, as we may presume from the extreme resentment which the people of Rome showed after his death, and from all the indignities they offered to his memory. Thus again, a Paschal seized on some of the principal men of Rome, officers of the emperor, and free from any crime but that of maintaining the imperial rights. He ordered their eyes to be put out; their hands and feet, and

after these their heads to be cut off, in the Lateran palace. An army was sent to Rome to punish this usurpation of power and excess of cruelty. His holiness purged himself of the crime by oath. But his holiness was forsworn, and having escaped the punishment, did not seem concerned to conceal the perjury; for he declared afterward, that the persons he had caused to be executed were guilty of high treason, which he must have understood to be high treason against himself, and absolved the murderers, because they were of St. Peter's family. All this and more, that weak prince, the Debonnaire, endured from the popes, who came to such a pitch of power and insolence, by the bigotry of the age, and by the advantage they took of the troubles which arose in the empire, that in the second generation after Charlemagne, Charles the Bald was obliged to purchase the empire of the pope by very great concessions. He quitted all right to jurisdiction in Rome, and the country about it, and instead of reserving to himself that of making the election of popes valid by the imperial confirmation, he is said to have yielded that of creating and of crowning emperors to the pope.

SECT. XXXVI.

A universal and publick dissolution of manners, into which the clergy in general had fallen, might have brought disgrace on the whole order, sufficient

cient even in those ages to have opened the eyes of the laity, to have stopped their profuse charity to the church, and to have converted their blind submission into a just indignation. But, beside the favourable circumstance already mentioned, that apparent sanctity of the few which served to screen the vices of the many, it is true, that this dissolution of manners received some checks from time to time. One of these I will point out. The synod, or the assembly of the states, for it consisted of laity and clergy both, which was held at Aix in the reign of the Debonnaire, made some reformation in convents, where the debauchery was scandalous beyond all measure. Rules were established of stricter discipline for monks and nuns, and the episcopal order was restrained from some excesses. Bishops were forbid to adorn their habits with gold and jewels, to wear swords and belts, to dress in scarlet, and to make war. I am far from believing, that new constitutions made, or old ones renewed, had an intire effect, or produced a real reformation, but they might save some of the worst appearances, which was enough for a church wherein a spirit of policy, not a spirit of religion, prevailed. Thus much too might be easily brought about, when the exercises of true piety were changed into superstitious practices; when it cost so little to be a good bishop, a good priest, a good monk, or a great saint, that it was necessary rather to disguise than to restrain their passions; and when these men could acquire such holy characters by no greater merit than

this, and even make themselves amends for disguising or restraining some of their passions by indulging others. Pride, revenge, avarice, and ambition, had only their names to change, and their effects were consecrated with the greatest applause. It is easy to conceive too, that these vices of the mind were pursued with greater application, and by more persons in the common cause of the church, when sensuality and debauchery were a little more restrained; and that this kind of reformation, instead of making the clergy better men, made them only more dangerous enemies of the state.

Laymen assisted to reform the clergy without much success, churchmen continued to incroach on the laity with great success, and the breach of that alliance which Pepin, and his son Charles the Great, had lately made between the imperial and papal power, as Constantine had made one before between the monarchy and the hierarchy, grew wider and wider, and disturbed the whole christian world. It could not happen otherwise, when once the bishops of Rome had resolved to be monarchs as well as the emperors, their rivals at least, perhaps their masters; and when they had acquired strength sufficient, which they were not long in acquiring, to make these attempts. Examples may be produced of churchmen, and assemblies of churchmen, who have opposed, on some few occasions, the most violent excesses of papal tyranny. The particular motives they had are not always developed in history. But particular

cular and temporary motives, arising from particular conjunctures, they must have had, whenever they held such a conduct. Though they had some dependence still on princes, even when the popes were grown bold enough to claim and exercise over these a most exorbitant power, yet their dependence on the pope was double wherever his supremacy was established; which I presume to have been the case in all the christian countries of the West soon after the end of the eighth century. Princes had it in their power to show favour, in many respects, and to deal out some degrees and kinds of punishment to the members of the religious society, as we have accustomed ourselves in this Essay to call the clergy. The popes had their share of this influence too, and their share was, on the whole, the greatest. But there was another influence, arising from another interest, which centred in them alone.

Of this influence princes could have no share; for it arose from an interest contrary to theirs. Princes and priests had agreed in encroaching on the rights of the civil society, according to the true spirit of their alliance, while the government of the church was aristocratical. But when it became monarchical, the scene was changed. The groundless distinction between spiritual and temporal power had been long established, and had taken full possession of the minds of men. The former had been exercised from the time of Constantine, with no small confusion, by different churches, in different countries, and in all with

much dependence on the civil power, and a real subordination to it. But Charles the Great did, in effect, and in consequence, unite the dispersed powers of the western church under one direction, and raise the pope from an œcumenical bishop, with limited and disputed prerogatives, to be a spiritual emperor, with a large share of temporal dominion. This new ecclesiastical constitution, for such it may be truly called, which he made, or to which he gave occasion, might be of immediate advantage, in many respects of ambition, to himself. But this, like many other temporary expedients, proved fatal in it's consequences. As the division of the Lombards into several dukedoms weakened their power, and prepared the way to the destruction of it; so the the union of all the churches of the West under one head strengthened ecclesiastical power, and prepared the way to all the conquests it made. As soon as the religious society had an emperor of their own order at their head, the successors of Charles had no longer a prevailing influence over them. They thought it no longer necessary to keep fair with those princes, to help them and to be helped by them in plundering and subduing the civil society, as they had done before. They affected independency on all authority that was not ecclesiastical, and hoped to obtain, by conquering the emperors themselves under the papal banners, much greater advantages than those they had obtained already by their alliance with the imperial authority.

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The contests which the popes, supported by this spirit in the clergy, raised, under the immediate successors of Charles the Great, continued during the course of many ages, and brought infinite mischief, as well as disgrace, on christianity, that was not answerable for either. The points in dispute were few, but they were very important: and to suffer a decision of them in favour of the popes, was nothing less than to acknowledge their sovereignty in every christian state, as well as their supremacy in every christian church. The emperors conferred benefices, and invested the prelates by the staff and the ring. The election of the popes themselves, how much soever they had been raised above all other bishops, was so far from being independent on the emperors, that it was not reputed valid, till it had been confirmed by them; nor did they confirm it, till the person elected had taken an oath of submission and obedience to them. One of these prerogatives was necessary to maintain that share of influence which they had left themselves over the clergy in their own dominions, and the other to check the farther growth of that monarchical power, which they had helped, as well as suffered, the popes to assume in the church, and which the ecclesiasticks were but too ready in every place to abet; for the bishops did not seem to perceive either time enough, or strongly enough, what chains they were preparing for themselves. Both the prerogatives were the more necessary to be maintained, since Charles the Great had thrown so immense

a share of temporal power into the hands of the prelates, as well as of the popes, by the earldoms, baronies, and other estates of much authority as well as dignity in the empire, which he gave them. Beside which, it is to be considered, that if any of the power which the emperors exercised in the investitures was usurped, it was usurped on the christian congregations, not on the popes: and if the popes had usurped this power out of the empire, in Britain and elsewhere, the emperors might very well think it too much to suffer, that they should profit of their own usurpations, and of those which had been made by others. As to the superiority of the imperial over the pontifical authority in general, it had not only been acknowledged in the days of heathen emperors and heretick princes, such as the Gothick kings were, but it had been exercised by the Greek emperors in matters of doctrine, as well as discipline, and had been recognised most solemnly in the days of Charlemagne, in every respect of dominion and discipline at least. Many authentick monuments proved the acknowledgment; and the recognition of the imperial sovereignty was so recent, when the popes began to shake it off, that as no impudence less than that of the court of Rome could deny it, no ingratitude less than that of the popes could forget so soon, to whose favour they owed much of their spiritual, and all their temporal grandeur.

SECT. XXXVII.

THUS the cause of the emperors stood, while that of the popes was founded on nothing better than assumption, forgery, and the most barefaced usurpation. They assumed, and their advocates assume still, that Christ established a kingdom when he was on Earth. They call it his church, and play with the ambiguity of the word; for when they mean to speak of the supposed actual kingdom of Christ on Earth, the word church signifies the whole body of christian people; and when they mean to speak of the governors or government of this supposed kingdom, the same word is used to signify the whole ecclesiastical order, with the pope at the head of it. To say in plain terms, that Christ established a religion, a rule of faith and manners, the conformity or nonconformity to which is to be rewarded or punished by Christ himself in another life, and that he commissioned certain men to preach it, and to commission others to preach it, would not lay a foundation sufficient for the immense building that has been erected, and is still kept up, though it has tottered long. They were glad at first to found their primacy on an imperial rescript. But they soon assumed, that Christ instituted a sovereign pontiff to govern this church or kingdom, that this pontiff was Peter the prince of his apostles, and that he did this agreeably to all laws di-

vine and human; nay, that he would not have shown common discretion, if he had neglected to leave such a vicar behind him as might execute all his own powers. They assume, that the popes are the successors of Peter, that they have all his powers as he had Christ's, and are, as he was, the vicars of Christ *. They assume a multitude of other things, relative to these, which it is unnecessary I should stay to enumerate. Now of these assumptions, which are the principal, every man is a competent judge who can read the Gospels; for we must own, that no powers, like those which are assumed, can belong to the church now, nor could belong to the apostles themselves, unless they are evidently contained therein: or else we must beg the question most absurdly, as our protestant writers, and the least papal of yours, such as du Pin and Giannone, that I may quote a lawyer as well as a divine, have done. They supposed, that Christ established a society distinct from the civil, in every society where his religion should be received, by the commission given to his apostles and disciples. Let us suppose this to be true, for the sake of argument. Let us sup-

* Quod divino et humano jure ita semper factum reperietur, Christum suorum apostolorum principem constituisse Petrum. This is cited by Casaubon in his fifth Exercit. on Baronius. Omnis potestas mihi data est in cœlo et in terrâ. Mat. xxviii, 18. This is the text. The papal commentary follows. Non videretur dominus discretus fuisse, ut cum reverentia ejus loquar, nisi unicum post se talem vicarium reliquisset, qui hæc omnia posset. Vid. aut. Glossar. in Extrav. unam sanctam.

pose,

pose, in consequence of it, that this society had a power to make laws for it's own advantage and better government, provided these laws did not disturb the established order of the state, as every other particular and lawful society has by common right, according to them, but not according to truth, in so great a latitude. When all this is yielded to them, all that will follow is, that such a society had a power of making by-laws, to which all the members of it, that is, all ecclesiasticks, were subject, and they alone. I say ecclesiasticks alone, that the church sophists may not impose on us by an equivocal use of terms, nor employ the word church in one sense, in one part of their argumentation, and in another sense, in another. If they say, and they do say, that the legislative power spoken of was given to the religious society exclusively of the civil, their argument drawn from the rights of particular societies is good, as far as their society is concerned. But if they say, and they do say, that the civil society of Christians was and is subject to these laws, they beg the question, and they grow absurd. The comparison is no longer just, nor the argument good; for though it be granted, that the by-laws of a particular society may govern that society, it is denied, that they can be-laws to the whole community. Laws to the whole community no power, that is not the sovereign power in that community, can prescribe. I know that the trite distinction between spiritual and temporal is always at hand. But I ask, is this power coercive or not? If it be not so, a power which begins

begins and ends in spirituality, cannot be very dangerous nor oppressive. But if it be coercive, they may call it spiritual as long as they please; it is what I just now said, the power of a particular society to make laws, not for themselves alone, but for the whole community; and as much as the church advocates endeavour to disguise the absurdity, and to evade the consequences, this is what they mean.

If this was not their meaning, to what purpose should they insist so much, or at all indeed, on the great superiority of the clergy as a more holy order over the laity, and of spiritual power and dignity over the temporal? This they have all done, from Cyprian, first a magician, and afterward a father of the christian church, down to that learned bigot Dodwell, who wrote dissertations on him. This they do even in this country, and at this hour, as openly as they dare; for let us not be deceived by the low cunning and dissimulation of some. Whoever asserts, that the ecclesiastical order is of divine institution, and by that institution independent of the state, whatever alliance this order may think fit to suppose has been made with it, says in effect all that they say who speak more openly, more honestly, and more consistently. Giannone, who writ at Naples, carries these notions so far, that he lies open to ridicule in this particular, how respectable an author soever he be in general. He quotes Cicero to show, that, in the Roman commonwealth, they who presided over the affairs of the state presided

over

over those of religion, by a custom derived from their forefathers; and that nothing is more worthy of princes and men, distinguished by their knowledge in human affairs, than to be so likewise by their knowledge of those that are divine. He says, that the two characters of king and priest were united often in heathen governments. But that the christian religion, proposing a much more noble object than the mere prosperity of states and the publick tranquillity, the dignity of the priesthood among Christians is separated from the imperial dignity, and raised as much above it as things divine are above things human, as the soul is more noble than the body, and as eternal happiness is preferable to that of this life. He tells us afterward, that notwithstanding this wide difference, the two characters may be united in the same person, by an accession of the temporal to the spiritual dignity, not by any accession of the spiritual to the temporal. The reason he gives is, because ecclesiastical dignity, being the greatest, cannot become an accession to, or a dependence on the least; whereas the least may be in that relation to the greatest: and thus you see, that a priest may stoop to the exercise of regal power, but a king cannot be raised up to the exercise of ecclesiastical, no, not to that of a country curate.

If a man, of as much knowledge and as little bigotry as this historian, could publish to the world, for I do not think he believed, such extravagancies, in the eighteenth century, we cannot

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be surprised, that these, and greater than these were taught, and piously believed too, in the ages of ignorance and superstition. But if the primitive clergy maintained such notions in speculation, they could not maintain them in practice. They had been sheep among wolves before Constantine. They were sheep, under the conduct of shepherds, after him: and these shepherds or principal pastors were the emperors. They became in process of time wolves among sheep: and emperors themselves were often the sheep they preyed upon. It is not only true, that the emperors meddled very far in matters of religion, in matters of doctrine, I say, as well as of discipline; it is not only true, that councils were summoned by their authority; but it is true likewise, that the clergy had recourse to the same authority to confirm their canons, and to give them the force of laws. The Nicæan canons were confirmed by Constantine; those of Constantinople by Theodosius: those of the council of Chalcedonia by Marcianus: and we need go no farther than the Theodosian code, though we might do so, to prove, that the by-laws of the religious society acquired the force of laws, even in points of discipline that concerned this society alone, by the imperial, not the ecclesiastical authority, and by being inserted among the imperial constitutions. So that not only the ratification of the emperors was necessary to the doctrines they taught; but the by-laws they made, for the government of their own society, were subject to the civil power.

It

It would not be hard to show, by a multitude of examples, that the church had no more claim allowed in those days to judicial and executive power, nor to the immunities and privileges she enjoyed, than she had to legislative power; that is, no more than the emperors allowed her: unless we should call the power of excommunication, which I suppose bishops exercised both before and after Constantine, with the advice and consent of their presbyters alone, wherever they durst, a part of executive coercive power. But if this may be called executive, it cannot be called coercive. It was a censure, it was an exclusion from christian congregations; but this censure, and this exclusion, operated on the imagination alone; and, the punishment being imaginary, the power was so too. It was nothing more till the increase of ecclesiastical, and the concurrence of civil authority made it more. In short, the power and dignity of the religious society were much higher in speculation and pretension, than they were in practice and reality, even for some time after the reign of Charlemagne, as high as this emperor raised them. The prelates in general, and the bishops of Rome in particular, before his time, and in it, made a show of the greatest meekness, and of the greatest humility and submission to the emperors; though they were even then in pursuit of the greatest objects of ambition. The successors of that wicked saint, Gregory, continued to take, like him, the title of servants of the servants of God, at the very time when they sacrificed all the senti-

ments

ments of humanity to the pride of being called œcumenical bishops; at the very time when they meditated, nay, when they attempted to be masters of the masters of the world. By this hypocritical behaviour, and by that silly distinction between spiritual and temporal power, government of the church, and government of the state, they hindered men from taking an alarm that should have been taken sooner, and their tyranny was established almost before it was perceived.

When the Roman bishops pulled off their mask, and began to contend openly for power with the emperors, the ecclesiastical maxims which had been assumed for evangelical truths, and the whole tendency of which had not been discerned, became of infinite service to them. These paradoxes could not be proved. But they had been admitted; and the papal pretensions might be proved, plausibly enough, to be the necessary consequences of them. Thus it happens often: a few false principles, uncautiously received, establish whole systems of errour, and absurdity becomes capable of demonstration. But false speculative notions were not employed alone in the cause of the papacy. False facts, and false records were necessary; and therefore forgery was added to assumption*. Forgery is a hard word, but

* N. B. Leslie, who was in religion as much a bigot as in politicks, makes a member of the church of England assert, in a supposed dialogue between him and a Roman catholick, that

but it must be used when truth exacts that it should. I say then, that as it had been employed for holy purposes, in the early ages of christianity, it was employed, in those we speak of here, for purposes very unholy. No man dares deny the first: and the advocates of Rome themselves, Baronius and others, are obliged to confess the last. Fathers were opposed to fathers, and councils to councils, about canonical writings; traditions of the western, to traditions of the eastern churches; and those that were most distant in time and place, to those that were nearest in both, to the source of these very traditions. Add to all this, the approved custom of speaking and writing agonistically, or with œconomy, that is, the custom of saying one thing and meaning another; which St. Jerom, that great critick, and voucher of canonical Scriptures, avowed, practised, and recommended: add this consideration, I say, to the rest, and you will not be surprised to hear it advanced, that we know neither why the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse we have, were retained, or rather inserted in the canon; nor why

that there were false Gospels and false Epistles ascribed to several of the apostles, set up by hereticks in the first age; that they were detected in that same age, while the originals of what the apostles wrote were still in being; but that the hereticks could not produce the originals of theirs, nor did their copies agree one with another. For all this, he quotes Eusebius, and adds, this was not deciding the matter by authority, but by plain evidence of a fact, as of any other forgery, or supposititious writing.

them, and who corrected and published them, deserve! Dionysius, the little Scythian abbot, made the first collection of them, at least the first that came into general use, in the sixth century, and at Rome. After the eighth, they were mingled up with decrees of popes, and constitutions of Charlemagne, the great instrument, as well as patron, of papal usurpations. The Benedictine monk, Gratian, made a new collection in the twelfth century, and stuffed it with texts of Scripture, as well as opinions of fathers. Of the former we may say, properly enough, "non erat his locus," and of the latter, that they do not deserve even the name of "responsa prudentum." If he was, and I think he was, brother of the Master of the Sentences, the two brothers established the two most impertinent sciences that ever puzzled the heads of men and disturbed the peace of the world, canon law and scholastick theology. I say nothing of the Clementines, nor the Extravagants. They were published when the tyranny of Rome was already confirmed, and are as little to my purpose to be mentioned as the decretals published by that madman Boniface the Eighth.

Such was the origin of that system of law which is called the canon law, and by the prevalence of which the bishop of one city, and a few suburbicarian provinces, invaded and subjected to his authority the civil laws of every country, the laws of nations, and the laws of nature themselves. Many of the decrees of popes, that the monkish collectors foisted into this ecclesiastical code, had not been

been made, very probably, many of them had not been executed, very certainly, at the time, and on the occasions pretended; and yet they all acquired, in process of time, a supposed authenticity, and became precedents alike. Just so, by an inversion of all the rules of good criticism and of common sense, their other forgeries got into credit. The least of these were false representations of things true. By them vain ceremonies, which the popes were admitted to perform, and vain compliments, which emperors and princes paid them, came in after-ages to pass for acknowledgments of a right, and presents that were made them, nay, bribes that were given them, for tribute. The greatest were those gross lies, and all those fabulous relations which they invented and propagated, to nourish superstition, or to justify usurpation, which were not only void of all foundation, but often irreconcilable to history and chronology; and which, however, were repeated till they were believed, on the faith of fabulous legends. Thus they builded up a sovereignty, at all times the most absurd, and, for a long time, the most tyrannical, that had ever been felt over the western world. A uniform system of ambition steadily and artfully pursued, from one generation to another, through ages of ignorance and superstition, wherein it was easy to impose on the understandings of men, and to direct their consciences, established this tyranny little by little. It grew up fastest from the time it was established in the outskirts of the empire, in Britain, and in Spain, for

instance. It grew up less in France, and it was reverenced least of all at Rome. The Romans were pleased to see their city become the seat of chimerical, when it was so no longer, of real empire. But then they used their pontiffs, as they had sometimes used their emperors. They abetted their conquests abroad, and treated their persons ignominiously at home. These pontiffs were never more respected in foreign nations, than they were at the time when they gave the greatest scandal, and recived the greatest insults in Italy. By the means, and by the conduct that have been mentioned, however, they were able, even in such circumstances, to assert, with success, the most exorbitant of their pretensions against the greatest emperors.

This success varied, indeed, on some particular occasions; but on the whole, and in the event, it was in their favour. Thus, that I may quote two examples at least, the first Otho deposed John the Thirteenth, in the tenth century, for debauchery and treason; directed and confirmed the election of Leo the Eighth; restored this pope when he had been expelled from his seat by a rival; chose another, and reestablished the imperial right to grant investitures, and to nominate the bishops of Rome, which prerogatives had been lost by the successors of Charlemagne. Thus, on the other hand, Gregory the Seventh, in the next century, taking up the contest about these very prerogatives, which was again on foot, carried it on with so much success, that all circumstances considered,

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by what he effected, and by what he put it in the power of his successors to effect, he may be esteemed a worse man, and a greater conqueror than Alexander or Cæsar. In this contest, he had the address to gain to his side the mother and the aunt of the emperor Henry the Fourth, and to debauch, in every sense of the word perhaps, his cousin german, the Countess Matilda. At least, the manner in which she lived with this dirty monk, and which was not at all necessary to the support of a cause she might and did affect to favour on a religious principle, justifies the accusation sufficiently. He made the Saxons revolt; he divided the empire; he excommunicated the emperor and all his adherents, over and over: and when he was asked, by what right he had presumed to deprive this prince of his crown, and to absolve the subjects of the empire from the allegiance they had sworn to him; he answered, that he had done it conformably to customs and usages of his predecessors*. Such customs, and such usages, before Hildebrand, were entirely unknown to the most learned men in former ages, as well as in ours. But Hildebrand had precedents ready to allege, and some such are, I believe, mentioned in letters of his writing. How, indeed, should he want them, when Rome was a storehouse of acts of papal power, which were never executed, nor would have been suffered at the times when they pretended to have been executed, but were laid up

* Maim. Decad. de l'Empire.

to be produced on future occasions? This instance may serve to prove, by the way, therefore, the truth of what is said above; for whether the pope invented these fabulous relations himself, or whether his secretary furnished him with false documents, as I learn by a note of Bayle it has been supposed in his excuse, these lies were coined in the papal mint. To conclude, this emperor, who came, it is said, victorious, out of more than sixty combats, and who had forced his enemy from Rome into an exile from which he never returned, at Salerne, was deposed, dethroned, and confined to the prison, where he died, by his son, Henry the Fifth, whom Paschal the Second encouraged in his rebellion, and excited to this cruelty.

After the death of Henry the Fourth, the popes completed their usurpations very soon. As they robbed the emperors of the right to confirm their elections, they robbed the clergy and the people of the right to elect them; for it was decreed at Mantua, that the cardinals alone should choose the popes. In a council held at Troyes, it was decreed, that investitures to benefices belonged to the sovereign pontiff alone; because religion was polluted, said these reverend fathers, when persons, dedicated to the service of the heavenly and immortal King, became subjects and vassals of an earthly and mortal prince. In a council held at Rheims, Henry the Fifth, who had taken up his father's quarrel with the popes, though he had rebelled in the same quarrel against

his

his father, was excommunicated: and these circumstances, with others discernible enough in history, determined him to a composition. He gave up the right of investitures; for he consented to hold it by a grant from the pope, and not as an imperial prerogative. He consented too, that this grant should be restrained to him personally, and that the prerogative should belong solely to the see of Rome after his decease. The popes were now arrived at that height of power and independency, which had been so long the object of their ambition. They have maintained themselves in it, as they attained to it, by fomenting rebellions, assassinations, massacres, and by employing superstition to keep up, in every state, a private conscience, favourable to the ecclesiastical, and dangerous to the civil authority. Such have been the consequences of an alliance between the monarchy and the hierarchy; (for those who talk of an alliance between the religious and civil society deserve only contempt, when they affirm, with fact and common sense both against them) and I believe, that from the days of Charles the Great to the Reformation, no instance can be brought of a contest between them, wherein the bishops of Rome have not prevailed in the whole, or in some very essential points, by the wise maxim of observing conjunctures, and of pushing their pretensions to the utmost, with violence and insolence; or of reducing them to terms of real, or seeming moderation. When conjunctures were favourable, they bullied and usurped: when these were

were unfavourable, they whined; composed, if they could, and, if they could not, submitted. Had the civil powers of Europe seen their danger in time, and united against it, these things could not have happened, nor the christian church have become a perpetual source of the greatest evils to the christian world. But the civil powers were divided, and the popes growing of more and more consequence, as their dignity and authority increased, every side was glad to have them, and the side that bid most, or yielded most, was sure to have them. France had raised and protected them: and France afforded a terrible example, even as lately as the sixteenth century, of her own mistaken policy in the ninth and following centuries.

Notwithstanding the great success which the popes had, and the superiority they acquired over all christian princes, by acquiring it over the emperors, the struggle was hard; the event had been sometimes doubtful, and it was not very certain that they would be able to maintain the rights, they had already usurped, or to keep the laity in constant awe by the thunder of excommunications. To make their work sure, therefore, they judged it necessary to invent still new expedients, and to improve every old one that had served to exalt ecclesiastical power and dignity. They did more. They found means to divert the attention of mankind from Europe to Asia, and to confirm, insensibly, the tyranny they had usurped, by engaging the princes and states of the West, to undertake

dertake romantick expeditions for extending it into the East. The epidemical madness of the croisades, which ambition, superstition, and licentiousness, combined to nourish, lasted two hundred years: and if these unholy wars did not extend the dominion of the church, nor establish the papal power, in the countries where they were made, both the church and the popes found their account in them several ways, where they meaned much more to find it. The croisades were conspiracies of the religious, against the civil society of Europe. These two societies were nearly on a balance of power. The croisades turned it in favour of the former. Mezeray thinks, that the uneasy and dangerous situation of his affairs in Italy determined Urban the Second to come into France, when he held the council of Clermont there, and that the promoting of the first expedition against the Saracens was nothing more than a pretence he took. But he had no need of any such pretence. He was a Frenchman; and France, as Mezeray himself says, was the ordinary refuge of the popes. Besides, when he had resolved to put in execution this unchristian project, he could not fail to see, that there was no country then in Europe, wherein this scene of farce, which was to produce so many scenes of tragedy, could be acted with so much advantage as in France. Italy and Germany were divided between him and the emperor. Spain was the theatre of one perpetual war against the Moors. Britain was superstitious enough, but Britain lay

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in a remote corner of the world: the Norman invasion was just over, and the new government scarce settled. France was liable to none of these objections: and the success which his holiness had there might surpass his expectations, as it surpasses almost the belief of posterity. The enthusiastical fury, for such it was, infused at Clermont by the pope, and fomented by his emissaries every where else, became at once an epidemical distemper, and all Europe grew delirious. Princes abandoned their dominions, and private men their patrimonies, to the care and protection of the church. Beside innumerable frauds that the clergy committed, the regulars especially, to invade the possessions of the laity; the laity was obliged to sell them on these occasions, and the clergy was ready and able to buy. No wonder, therefore, since power always follows property, if the religious society was strengthened by being enriched; if the civil was weakened by being impoverished, and if, upon the whole, the church gave the law to the state.

Many other expedients were employed, like so many underprops to support the same system. They were less observed as such, because they carried an appearance of religious austerity and self-denial, of edification, not of acquisition. Some of the men who furnished these expedients, and who made them effectual to the purposes of ecclesiastical ambition, were the bubbles and the victims of their own superstitious zeal. But fools have been always led, in matters of religion espe-

cially, by designing knaves. Hermits had been summoned from their solitudes, on some occasions, to support a turbulent seditious bishop; one example of which has been referred to above. How much more easy was it for that universal bishop, the pope, when religious orders multiplied, as they did prodigiously, in the ages we speak of here, and when, whoever instituted, he confirmed them, to employ these standing armies of monks more silently, but more effectually too, in his service? The croisades gave much occasion to these institutions; and the extravagance was carried so far, that military orders were instituted among the rest, that is, orders of men, whose particular profession obliged them to defend and propagate christianity, as long as they lived, by cutting of throats. This, indeed, was the general profession of all those who took the badge of the cross, whenever a pope thought fit, for the time, at least, for which they engaged. I say, whenever a pope thought fit; because this cruel expedient, which had been employed originally against the Mahometans, was employed afterward against Christians, against all such as were called hereticks, when every man was called by that name, who did not, because he could not, think as the church of Rome ordered him to think, or who exclaimed against the abominable corruptions of that court.

Among the expedients by which the religious society was attached to the pope independently of their lawful sovereigns, and to the church independently of the state, that of a forced celibacy

was

was one. They were a distinct order of men, and had a separate interest from the other society before. But by this institution every band, that might have united some of them at least to it, was cut off, under the specious pretence of a greater degree of christian purity and perfection. Monks and nuns took a vow of chastity, wherein celibacy was included, according to the logick employed for this political purpose: and it was manifestly necessary to the same purpose, that the secular clergy should be put under the same restraint. They were intended to mingle, more than the others, with civil society. Their habitudes were much the same, and their interest not so separate. There was, therefore, the more danger, that they might contract a love for the civil constitution of their country, prefer their king to the pope, and reverence a parliament or assembly of the states more than a council. All that could be done to prevent so great a mischief was, to hinder this attachment to their country from increasing by that natural attachment, which fathers of families have to their children. This was seen early, and the bishops of Rome had taken upon them, as far back as the seventh century, to forbid the marriages of priests. Their orders had been rejected by some, by the Spaniards particularly, and had been ill obeyed in general. But celibacy was now enjoined more strictly, and enforced more powerfully. Decrees of popes, canons of councils, all kinds of authority, were employed: and it must be confessed,

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to the honour of ecclesiastical policy, that the yoke imposed was rendered as light as possible by connivance, and even by indulgence. The concubinage of priests was tolerated, nunneries became brothels, and if among the standing expenses of convents a reasonable allowance was not made to the monks for the necessary expenses of fornication, "ad purgandos renes," and on a principle of health, which has been said, but may be denied; this at least is notorious, that the fathers were left to provide for their health, in the best manner that they could, by simple fornication, or by adultery.

As this expedient attached the whole clergy more intimately to the general interest of the church, and to the particular interest of the pope, auricular confession and private penance were designed to attach the people more intimately to the clergy *. Publick confessions, and publick penance, as they had been practised in the primitive church, might impose more, and be a greater restraint on vice and immorality. But when it was thought sufficient, that all this passed privately between the confessors and the penitents, many advantages, which were deemed pre-

* N. B. Whatever private confessions, as well as others, might have been practised anciently, the law by which every person is obliged once in a year, I think, to confess all his sins to his proper priest, was not made till Innocent the Third got it enacted, among several that were calculated merely to advance the power and authority of the priesthood, in the Lateran council.

ferable

ferable to such a restraint, resulted from the modern practice. Penitents were exempted from publick shame; if they blushed, they blushed in a corner: and confessors had the most secret transactions, nay, the thoughts and designs, of mankind in their keeping. They had more: they had not only a general influence over private conscience, but the means of exercising this influence in private; the means of teaching privately what they dared not preach publickly, and of instilling into the minds of men every principle and passion they pleased. This expedient advanced the papal empire more than any: it made the bishop of Rome, in some circumstances, as terrible as the old man of the mountain, and enabled ecclesiastical ambition to do, more directly, more regularly, and more constantly than before, all the mischief that has been imputed to religion. A very moderate knowledge of history, ecclesiastical and civil, ancient and modern, will furnish examples enough to confirm this truth. It is impossible to read without horrour, for instance, the accounts we have of the ambition, insolence, and perfidy of Hadrian and Alexander, in their disputes with Frederick the First, whom Hadrian, like the king of the assassins, endeavoured to have drowned, stabbed, or destroyed by magick; and whom Alexander, they say, insulted, in the words of the psalmist, "super aspidem et basiliscum "ambulabis." As little can we read, without the same sentiment, the proceedings of Gregory the Ninth, a worthy successor of the seventh, in the

the next century, that is the thirteenth, against the second Frederick. But if all these histories, and others of the same kind were wanting, and we had no other than that of Thuanus, that of Thuanus alone would serve the purpose, and the better for being nearer our own time. That wise and honest historian acknowledges, that all the iniquities of the league were hatched and nursed up to maturity in the confessionals; after which, the effects of this private influence were publickly avowed, the sovereignty of the popes over all other sovereigns, in matters of religion, and in matters appertaining to religion, the infallibility of their judgments, their dispensing and deposing power, the duty of rebellion in some cases, and the merit of assassination in others, were propagated from the pulpits: and what their pastors preached, the people executed.

It might be expected, perhaps, that the quarrels which arose after the reign of Charles the Great, from a conflict of spiritual and temporal prerogatives and jurisdiction, as well as those disturbances which arose from dissenting opinions about articles of faith, and points of doctrine, long before his time, would be appeased, and prevented for the future, by the establishment of this papal monarchy. But, if such an expectation was entertained, it was wholly disappointed. The successors of Gregory the Seventh took every opportunity of asserting their right to all the powers, temporal and spiritual, that he had claimed, and of exercising them as vicars of Christ. There is

a decree of Boniface the Eighth, who was less able, less successful, and more mad, if possible, than Hildebrand, that holds it's place in the canon law, and that declares subjection to the Roman pontiff necessary to the salvation of every human creature*. This subjection too is not confined to spirituals; for, in the extravagants, he claims a right to the two swords, and asserts a jurisdiction over all temporal, as well as spiritual authority†. This jurisdiction was confirmed by the council of Lateran, and was founded in the theology of those doctors, who made a christianity of their own, with little regard to that of Christ, whose name it bore, and often in plain contradiction to his Gospel. Thus St. Thomas, the evangelical doctor, as he has been called very improperly and very impertinently, pretended to prove, by shameful prevarications, that such a submission as the popes required was an essential condition of salvation: and he, like the rest of his tribe, and their masters the popes, inflamed the dissentions about articles of faith and doctrines, as much as about prerogatives and jurisdictions.

To what purpose should I quote any more instances, to show, that this has been the proceeding of the church of Rome, as I have asserted before, and as I assert now over again, from the eleventh and twelfth centuries? The fact is notorious. But yet this doctrine had never been ac-

* Subesse Romano pontifici.

† Regem se regum, mundi monarcham, unicum in spiritualibus et temporalibus dominum promulgavit.

quiesced

quiesced in universally. Sometimes kings, nay, sometimes councils, had opposed it: and the reformers in the sixteenth century were so far from advancing any thing new on this head, that numbers of Christians in the West, as well as all the churches in the East, had constantly disowned it during every intervening age, and that the former had suffered, rather than to own it, the most cruel persecutions. Thus the same conflicts of jurisdiction were frequently renewed, and the same calamities continued by the same pertinacious spirit of ambition; till princes being tired with these struggles, they came little by little, at different times, and in different places, to certain terms of accommodation. Princes renewed with the popes their former alliances with the hierarchy, and compounded the best they could with the tyrant they had acknowledged. But notwithstanding these compositions, and though the popes dare not exercise their pretended rights as they did formerly, they keep up their pretensions, in hopes that a happy revival of ignorance and barbarity may do them, sooner or later, as much good as the unhappy resurrection of letters did them hurt.

SECT. XXXVIII.

Such as I have sketched them rudely, but truly, were the ecclesiastical and papal usurpations on civil sovereignty, complete almost before avowed,

and opposed as soon as avowed. But the other usurpations of Rome were different in their direction, and in their course. The intention of these being to vest in the bishop of that see the sole right of deciding in matter of faith and doctrine, either immediately without, or ultimately with the concurrence of a council, and by way of confirmation, they were plainly directed against all the inferior ranks in the hierarchy: and thus, while princes and states defended their own rights by constant, though unconcerted efforts, they left the pope at liberty to deal with his subjects, for such the clergy, even the prelates had made themselves, as he thought fit, and to proceed in his judgments with their advice or without it. The consequence soon followed; the laity believed as the church taught, and the church taught as the pope pronounced. But we must not imagine, that this usurpation on a prerogative the church had always exercised by her representative assemblies, convened without the papal authority, and acting independently on it, was admitted, because either the religious or the civil society thought it belonged to the pope by divine right; or because the former, being unable to resist it without the abetment and aid of the latter, neglected it as unconcerned in it. Neither of these societies could believe, that this prerogative belonged to the pope by divine right, which the greatest authorities, and the recent practice of the whole ecclesiastical order contradicted: and if we consider the passages of preceding ages,

ages, we shall find reason to believe, that princes and civil magistrates did not suffer this usurpation to take place because they neglected it, or thought themselves unconcerned in it, but because they desired, that it might take place. What is here said deserves to be explained: and when it is so, though it be simply my conjecture, I think it will justify itself.

From the time there had been such a thing as christianity in the world, Christians had been divided not only about compliments, rites and ceremonies, "such silly things", says Hooker, "that "very easiness doth make them hard to be dis- "puted about in serious manner *," but about every important article of their religion; and as soon as they had power in their hands, they persecuted one another, and disturbed the peace of the empire. To remedy this evil, councils were employed: but councils defined and decreed to little purpose. To support their decisions, the authority of the emperors was employed. Some of these, like Theodosius, made the most sanguinary laws, and exercised the most cruel tyranny, in the cause of orthodoxy. Others of them seemed to have so much concern for the church, that they had none for the empire; like Honorius, who was extremely busy at Ravenna in punishing Manicheans, Donatists, Priscillianists, and hereticks of every denomination, while the Goths marched withuot opposition to Rome. All

* Ep. Dedicat.

this, however, proved ineffectual, and new heads sprouted out from the hydra of theology, as fast as the spiritual and temporal swords lopped them off. It could not be otherwise. The Scriptures are a sure criterion of orthodoxy, when they are applied no farther than they were designed to be such: and they could be designed to be such no farther than they are intelligible and plain. He who pretends to employ this rule any farther, profanes the Scriptures, and abuses himself or others. This criterion, considered under the image of a rule, may be said to mark out to us the great points, the inches, and the feet, for instance. But the less dimensions, the lines, for instance, are not marked, or they are not discernible. The master builder, who put this rule into our hands, that we might work out our salvation by it, proportioned the rule to the work. How came we then, paltry builders that we are! to mark new and more minute divisions on this rule; to alter it, under pretence of making it more complete, and to measure and to build by guess? The Gospel is the rule: theology is the rule thus altered. He who adheres to one, founds his religion on divine, he who adheres to the other, on human authority; the first infallible and fixed, the second precarious and variable.

Metaphysicks and tradition, their own whimsies and those of their predecessors, guided the clergy, and constituted their theology. They never considered the Word of God naked, if I may say so, nor ever looked at it, except through a theological medium,

medium, through which every man might see whatever he had a mind to see in it. Many of the questions that arose were in no degree objects of reason: and no men living were less fit than the fathers of the church, the greatest of them, St. Chrysostom, or St. Jerom, and St. Ambrose, or St. Austin, to speak or write on any subject, that required a clear determination of ideas, a closeness of reasoning, an evangelical candour, or even common ingenuousness. Beside that it was difficult very often to know whether these men spoke sincerely, or with œconomy, they declaimed much; and those of them, who pretended to reason, reasoned ill. They perverted the sense, and defamed the characters of their adversaries: they quibbled and cavilled, and then decided dogmatically on subjects they did not understand; as St. Austin did, I presume, in the case of Pelagianism, and in the doctrine of absolute predestination, which he, after St. Paul, and Calvin after him, endeavoured to establish. Their personal partialities, the spirit of party and faction were manifest; as in the case of Origen, who did great honour and service to the christian church, and yet was condemned by the same prelate, that ordained Synesius bishop of Ptolemais, though the honest philosopher declined this honour, and declared he would neither abandon his wife, nor several of those Platonick opinions, that were repugnant to the christian doctrine. There are so many examples to justify this charge, in every part of it, that if any cholerick divine should presume

to deny it, the same fate might attend him and the fathers he took under his protection, as attended them, and the monk who defended them, against Barbeyrac. The charge might be proved out of their own works, and their theology shown to be no better than their ethicks.

I have touched over again, among others, some things that have been mentioned already, in order to introduce my conjecture about the reason, that might determine the civil powers to make no opposition to the popes, when they assumed first an absolute authority, even superior to that of councils, in matters of faith, and in all matters of doctrine and discipline. Their reason must have been political. It could not be religious. The manner of holding the first council at Jerusalem, and the manner of decreeing in it, as they are represented in the fifteenth of the Acts, made strongly for the councils, and not at all for the popes. This was certainly the first council, a precedent for all others, and the foundation of their authority over the whole church. No man, I believe, before Baronius, had discovered, that Christ himself held a council, and that he presided in it when he called his disciples to him and asked them first, as one who inquired about news, whom men said that he was; and next as a president, who took their opinions, whom they said that he was*. But this little sophistry was meaned to insinuate, that as Christ gave the keys

* Matt. xvi. Mark viii. Luke ix.

on

on this occasion to Peter and his successors, so he gave them particularly a superiority over councils, nay, that he rendered these the least useful assemblies in the world. Peter alone pronounced the decree of this type of a council *; and though the others assented, no doubt, yet does it not appear, that the form of consulting them was observed. The practice of the church afforded no more reason, than the terms of the Gospel, for this superiority of the popes over councils; but the woful experience of many ages showed how inadequate the institution of councils themselves was to the purpose of preserving uniformity in christian churches, and peace in christian states: and this political consideration became a sufficient reason to the civil powers for favouring, or at least for not opposing the usurpation of the popes, in the instance we speak of here.

It had been found necessary, even in the apostolical age, to elect a presbyter in every church, who might preserve the unity of it by his authority, and prevent the schisms which arose perpetually. This was the institution of bishops. As christianity spread, as bishops multiplied, as they grew more powerful, and as theology grew more contentious, the same expedient, that had been found useful, if not wholly effectual, to preserve the uniformity of particular churches, might seem the most proper to be employed for the same purposes in the universal church: and in this case

* Actio Christi typum quendam exprimit celebrandi concilium.

who

who so fit to be the universal bishop as the bishop of Rome? Rome had been the seat of empire, when the empire had been in its glory. If the dignity of cities was to determine, as it had always done, the dignity of sees, there was none that could vie with that of Rome. If a right derived from St. Peter, the supposed prince of the apostles, was to determine, there was none neither, in this case, to vie with that of Rome. Antioch, the first bishoprick of Peter, had yielded to the second imperial city, Constantinople. Who could vie then with the bishop of the first imperial city, that pretended, and was believed to have been the second bishoprick of Peter, as well as the scene of his martyrdom?

It is true, that some bishops of Rome had erred most grievously in their judgments, and been scandalous in their manners. But others had retrieved, in some degree, the honour of the see: and if the heresies and the vices of popes were made objections against them, in this case, what church was there that could boast an uninterrupted succession of orthodox and pious prelates? In short, all the churches of the West had contracted, in process of time, such an habitual reverence for that of Rome, that her opinions in matters of religion and conscience had been frequently asked, and that the judgments of her bishops had been received with an apparent submission, even by those who did not acknowledge, till long afterward, a power to impose them. The churches of Spain and of Gaul afford a most remarkable

markable instance to our present purpose, in the famous case of the procession of the Holy Ghost. Both of them paid a great regard to the papal authority in matters of this kind: the latter, I think, most and soonest; though the former has outstripped her since in a bigot attachment to it: and yet both these churches had added the words "filioque," in order to declare their belief, that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Son as well as the Father, to the Constantinopolitan creed, not only without, but against the consent of the popes. This addition too was not only maintained three hundred years together, but imposed, at last, on the church of Rome; one of her infallible bishops having admitted it into his Creed very wisely, and chosen to authorise what he could not alter, rather than to suffer so great a part of the western church to stand in opposition to his infallibility, at the very time when the establishment of it was attempted.

After this time the clergy grew more obsequious to the popes, and more insolent to their princes; for as the power of the former increased, their independency on the latter increased with it. If it had not been so, we should have heard of more oppositions to the doctrines of Rome, and those we do hear of would have prevailed sooner. But as the civil power desired nothing more than an uniformity of belief for the sake of peace, and thought that this uniformity could be preserved no way so well as by giving to one bishop a superintendency over the faith of the whole church,

two

two things followed of course. One we know. The other we may conjecture from what we know. We know, that civil and ecclesiastical power united their efforts to exterminate, by inquisitions, by croisades, and all the cruelties they were able to exercise, every sect that arose in direct and open opposition to the doctrines and decisions of the church of Rome. We conjecture, that in cases where the opposition was more confined, and more disguised, where it seemed directed to diminish, rather than to abolish the authority of the popes, the same thing happened formerly in many places, which we see happen in France at this day. A great number of the inferior clergy, few of the prelates, refused to accept the constitution unigenitus. The former have been discountenanced and oppressed without much noise; and those of them that persist, persist in silence and obscurity. The others die off, and are replaced by men more complaisant and more politick. Thus the opposition to this bull will make no figure in history, and the doctrine of it will pass for that of the whole Gallican church conforming implicitly to a papal constitution. The pretended explanations, restrictions, and other prevarications, that were employed to trim between God and the pope, will remain in the pamphlets of the time alone, and in the closets of antiquaries. Thus an appearance of uniformity in matters of faith has been, and may be imposed on posterity, by stifling the proofs of the contrary: and if this failed, the church would have

have nothing more to do to preserve the illusion of uniformity, than what she has done so often and so long; to quote those alone who have spoken the same language as she speaks, and to take no notice of others, or to pass them by as hereticks, whose suffrage ought not to be brought to account.

The pope is a general; the clergy a standing army, which has fought his battles, like other armies, without any regard to the justice or injustice of the cause: and the common soldiers of which, as of other armies, have sometimes mutinied in particular quarters, the general officers seldom, the whole or the greatest part never. That even the common soldiers of this army should mutiny, at any time, may appear the more extraordinary, because no general ever recompensed the zeal of private men in his cause more signally than the pope has done. He procured them free quarters and very lucrative exemptions in every christian country. He abetted their insolence, and employed every artifice, as well as his whole power, to impose on the superstition of mankind a high conceit of the dignity of this spiritual militia. One artifice of this sort, the most extravagant that was ever invented, and the most effectual at the same time, shall be produced. You may be surprised, perhaps, when I say it was the doctrine of transubstantiation.

SECT. XXXIX.

NOTHING could be more intelligible, not even to human judgment more reasonable, than the institution of the Lord's Supper; since the sole design of it was, that Christians should commemorate in common the death of Christ, and the redemption of mankind, as well as signify, by participating of the same bread and the same wine, that they were of the same religion, if as Erasmus says, in paraphrasing St. Paul, "videtur ag-"noscere communem religionem qui communi-"bus cibis vescitur*." But refinements and figurative expressions employed about it made the plainest thing in the world mystical and unintelligible. The effects of the eucharist were made so first, and the very elements, the bread and the wine, became so afterward. This sacrament was no longer a simple act of commemoration and of profession. It was made a great and dreadful mystery, of which Christians may partake to their damnation, as well as to their salvation. The person, by whom it was instituted, is represented sometimes under images, that render it impossible to frame any of the efficacy, or even of the institution of this sacrament. Christ is a vine, he is a rock, nay he is a coat, according to St. Paul; and we clothe ourselves with him in

* Paraph. in Ep. ad Cor. Ep. 1, c. x, v. 15.

our

our baptism, according to St. Chrysostom. According to the same eloquent father too, he stands to us in the relation of a head, of a house, of a table, and of a root*. Now one of these images alone can give us any imperfect idea of the efficacy of this sacrament. Christ is the head of a body, and the faithful are the members. The same loaf is made up of many crumbs, the same body of members†: and therefore, according to St. Paul's reasoning, all those who eat of one loaf, compose one body §. Thus Christ is, in this community, at once the Son of God and the brother of man. The brother, but the elder brother, of the elect ‖; and in the Epistle to the Ephesians, we are said to be flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, "ex carne ejus et ossibus ejus." These immense and inexplicable advantages are to be ascribed, principally, to the efficacy of this mysterious sacrament. By baptism, we are made partakers of the Holy Ghost. By this sacrament, we are made such of the body and blood of Christ. But I will conclude, instead of citing any more particular instances, by borrowing from Casaubon some general words, that may serve to show how

* —— Christum suis esse non solum caput, domum, mensem, radicem, sed etiam vestem quando in baptismo Christus induatur. Vid. Casaub. in Exercit.

† Panis ex innumeris granis sic conflatus est——corpus sic ex diversis membris constat——Paraph. Eras.

§ Quoniam unus panis, unum corpus multi sumus, omnes qui de uno pane participamus. Ep. ad Corin. 1, c. x.

‖ Primogenitus in multis fratribus, Ep. ad Rom. viii.

high

high men's notions have been raised about this theological mystery, by the theological abuse of figures. "The eucharisty, rightly taken, is the "instrument of that conjunction by which we "grow into one body with the Son of God, "and with all the faithful—What can be more "admirable, what more stupendous, than that "man should be thus joined and coalited with "God, the creature with the Creator, the mor-"tal with the immortal, the finite with the "infinite, and Earth with Heaven? This "miracle is greater than that of creating a "world out of nothing*." I think it is: but I think too, that it would be as easy to distinguish the most extravagant language that Platonick or Pythagorean enthusiasts ever held out of blasphemy, as these orthodox expressions.

The yoke of christianity is easy, and the burden light. But if theology has shortened the decalogue, it has lengthened the creed, and has maintained hitherto, in the enlightened ages, such a tyranny over the minds of men, in opposition to reason and revelation too, as could not be established in the darkest without much difficulty.

* ——Eucharistiam legitimo modo sumptam instrumentum esse ejus conjunctionis, per quam in corpus unum cum filio Dei — coalescimus, et cum cæteris etiam omnibus fidelibus — quid magis admirabile aut magis stupendum, quàm jungi, atque adeo coalescere in corpus unum, hominem cum Deo, creaturam cum Creatore, mortalem cum immortali, finitum cum infinito, cœnum cum cœlo? Hoc majus est miraculum, quàm de nihilo mundum creasse.

In

In the case just mentioned, concerning the mystical effects of the eucharisty, we are required by human authority to believe, that the most divine and important truths are concealed under a variety of figurative expressions, which have no conceivable applications, at least none that are conceivable to us uninspired persons; or else such as cannot be made by us, without a profanation that shocks the ear of every man who keeps up in his mind an awful sense of the majesty of the Supreme Being; nor dares to think, like those whom we call divines, as familiarly and as lowly of God as of man. In the case that is to be mentioned, concerning the elements, as they are called, of the eucharisty, your church requires, and the whole christian church did require before the reformation, that we should believe substances, which give us the ideas of bread and wine, both before and after consecration, to be, after it, such substances as give us the ideas of flesh and blood. If we should say, that in fact they give us these ideas, we should lie most impudently: and if we should say, as you pretended catholicks do say, that, though they give us still the ideas of bread and wine, yet they are miraculously flesh and blood, we should talk a language that passes on millions, and yet can pass on no one man who consults his reason impartially, or who considers the proofs of christian revelation by miracles, which are, in truth, appeals to the senses.

We are all conscious, or very little experiment and reflection will suffice to make us so, that we

know nothing more of substances than their effects. God has given us no other way of distinguishing them: and if we abandon that, nothing can be affirmed or denied concerning them. A miracle may change one substance into another, as water was changed into wine at the feast in Galilee. But the accidents cannot remain, and the substance be changed; or to speak more plainly, a different substance must produce different ideas in us. A supernatural operation must be sensible, or it is no more a miracle than if nothing was operated. The guests at Cana would not have believed, that the water was turned into wine, if they had not been convinced of the change by their taste: and if the disciples were convinced, after his resurrection, that Jesus was the same Christ who had been crucified, it was because they said that they saw him to be the same, and that one of them probed the wounds he had received on the cross. According to the first example then, the communicants in your church should eat raw flesh, and the priest, by his peculiar privilege, should drink warm blood; for the transubstantiation is instantaneous: and, according to the last example, if the elements in the eucharisty continue to the sight and taste the same, they are the same bread and the same wine, after consecration, that they were before.

He who should think to evade the absurdity, by insisting, that God works two miracles at once, that he changes the bread and wine into flesh and blood, and, to exercise our faith, he alters the phy-

physical constitution of the elect in such a manner, on this occasion, that flesh and blood produce in them the ideas of bread and wine; he, I say, who should think so, would only increase the absurdity by endeavouring to evade it, as they who are in the dirt dirty themselves more by endeavouring to get out of it. He would assume a miracle and no miracle, or rather a miracle contrived to disguise a miracle, and a fraudulent imposition on our senses, for the excellent purpose of exercising faith against knowledge; and in direct contradiction to all the proofs, that Christ gave of the divinity of his mission by appealing to the senses of mankind: so that if transubstantiation be true, the whole christian revelation may be false. No one would impute such a kind of proceeding to any man who was not a professed juggler: and yet such a proceeding is imputed to God, by popes, councils, and the whole tribe of your divines. But it is time I should leave a subject, that gives me horrour, even when I write against it; and that has been exhausted by abler pens, by that of Tillotson particularly, in a short tract, preferable to immense volumes. It is time I should remember, that my business here is not to refute the doctrine of transubstantiation, but to show how it came to be established, and the political view of the popes in the establishment of it.

SECT. XL.

To this purpose then, I say, that a supposed mystery in the elements arose first, like a supposed mystery in the effects of the eucharisty, from figurative expression. There is no one, perhaps, in the whole Gospel, less liable to an equivocal sense than that which Christ employed, when he said, "this is my body, and this is my blood," in the very act of giving bread and wine to his disciples, who were at supper with him, just before his death, for a remembrance of which this ceremony of a supper was then instituted by him. The figure was easy, the application natural, and they could not understand the expression literally. It is impossible to suppose that they did, unless we suppose them mad: and yet it is this very expression, that has been made the foundation of a doctrine, which Hurons and Iroquois, Samojedes and Hottentots, would blush to own, and which has brought disgrace on christianity, if any ever did, as well as innumerable calamities on the christian world. The fathers of the church loved figurative style, and their whole theology is nothing else, but they employed it more to perplex than to explain: and it is not wonderful, therefore, if they seemed to confound the typical, or symbolical, with the real body of Christ. They seemed to do it, or they did it, if you will, sometimes. But when their matter led them to speak with more

more caution and precision, so many of them, and of the greatest of them, contradistinguished the first from the last, in such plain and strong terms, that it is evident a real corporal presence in the eucharisty was neither their opinion, nor the general belief of the church in the first ages. Give me leave to add, though I cite no other particular passages here, because they have been cited by many on the same occasion, that the inconsistency of your church never appears to me more barefaced than it does, when I consider, that she has made the writings of St. Austin almost a rule of faith; and yet, that this father not only declares, in many places, against her favourite doctrine, which was not at that time a doctrine, but guards against it, for fear it should become such by a wrong interpretation of the Scripture*. He brings an example of wrong interpretations that may be made, by quoting these words, "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of "Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in "you." These words interpreted literally contain, according to him, a great impiety. They are to be interpreted, therefore, figuratively. The doctrine of transubstantiation is, therefore, an impious doctrine, according to this father.

But how carefully soever the typical and symbolical body of Christ in the eucharisty was distinguished, on some occasions, from his real body, from the body born of the Virgin Mary, which was crucified, which rose from the dead, and

* De Doct. Christiana, l. 3.

which ascended into Heaven, they grew to be easily confounded in the minds of men, by the continual use of the same figure without the same explanation of it, and the sign passed for the thing signified among many. This has often happened; and it happened the more naturally in this case, because, the imaginations of men being heated with mystery, the doctrine that was the most mysterious was the most likely to prevail. The doctrine, however, of Christ's corporal presence in the sacrament would not have prevailed, even in the eighth century, very probably, so far as to be established by the authority of a council, if it had not been found necessary to evade an argument, that the breakers of images urged, and to support the stupid worship of them, as Tillotson observes. One synod, that of Constantinople, determined, that Christ had left an image of his body, the bread in the eucharisty, and therefore no other image of him ought to be made. Another synod, the secon d Nicæan, determined, about thirty years afterward, that the bread and wine, after consecration, were the body and blood, not the images of the body and blood of Christ; that he had, therefore, left no image of himself, and that other images of him might be worshipped. Zeal for idolatry of one kind propagated idolatry of another: and to the worship of images, which the Christians practised as well as the Heathens, and which the Heathens excused as well as the Christians, the latter added something too absurd, and too abominable, to

make a part of the religious rites of the former. They conjured their God into a wafer; they adored him in that wafer; they offered him up in a true sacrifice to himself, and they ate him up, to conclude the ceremony. "Sit anima mea cum "philosophis, non cum Christianis, gente stoli- "dissima, qui Deum faciunt et comedunt," a saying of Averröes, which no man needs to disown.

All this was not established, without great contest, nor soon. In the ninth and following centuries it was much opposed. One of those who opposed it, Berenger, dean of Angers, and a man famous for learning and piety, when there was little of either among the religious society, had been frightened into a recantation, which he recanted as soon as he got out of the papal hands. It is the less wonderful that he should do so; since the pope and his council appeared to have no very clear notion of their own doctrine, but blundered miserably when they defined it, in contradiction to that which he had taught; and since Gregory the Seventh found it necessary, a few years afterward, to define over again the pretended orthodox doctrine of the real corporeal presence. He left out of his definition the circumstances of handling and breaking, of grinding and bruising, this body between the teeth of the faithful, as I believe, because they were too shocking to stand in it, and might be insinuated with more advantage when the general doctrine had got prejudice on it's side. They have been so, they are avowed

parts of it, and this is the doctrine which was declared orthodox eleven hundred years after Christ in the Latin church, under the ridiculous name of transubstantiation; a ridiculous name indeed, and that bears more analogy to chemistry than to theology. What Hildebrand defined, his successors maintained: and Innocent the Third, who was a pope of the same spirit, procured a most solemn confirmation of it in the numerous council of Lateran, which he held at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and in which so many other things were done to advance his own tyranny, and the superiority of the religious over the civil society. The folly of the holy war was renewed, books of decretals were published and authorised, auricular confession was introduced, the cup was taken from the laity: in short, ecclesiastical pride and policy being now come to their height, the whole system of religion became more than ever a system of usurpation; and ambition improved to her purposes all that superstition and ignorance could be made to adopt. It will be no breach of charity, therefore, to affirm, that though the doctrine of Christ's real and corporal presence in the sacrament owed it's first rise to the abuse of figurative style, and to the disputes of divines on another subject, yet the solemn definition of transubstantiation was one of these artifices, that the popes employed to raise a high opinion of the dignity and power of the priesthood. No popes had ever more reason to raise such an opinion than Gregory the Seventh, and Innocent

nocent the Third; for none ever achieved nor undertook such conquests as these two made at the head of the church over the civil power, both of them in Germany, and the last of them in our island likewise.

We may say the better, that this artifice was contrived for the purpose I suppose, since the prerogative and power of making God himself is not only ascribed by the writers of your church to every priest, but an argument is drawn from thence to show how much reverence ought to be paid to an order of men, the least of whom has a prerogative and power of which the greatest earthly potentates cannot boast. But however this artifice was contrived and conducted, how impudently soever popes and councils imposed, for an article of faith, what it is more impious to believe, than it would be to disbelieve the whole creed, and however civil and ecclesiastical power united to enforce it, with all the fury of inquisitions, it never could gain, from the eleventh to the sixteenth century, in which it was rejected with a just abhorrence by whole nations, a full and quiet possession of the minds of men in any country; no, not in Italy; no, not at Rome. They who had not the front to defend this monstrous doctrine, and yet would not separate from the church of Rome, had recourse to the sole expedient that remained. Far from defending it, far from maintaining it as an original article of christian faith, they chose to put the decision on another point. Many of the most learned and orthodox,

dox, long before Luther and Calvin arose, had declared, that men were at liberty to believe, or not to believe, the manner of Christ's presence in the sacrament to be corporal, and by transubstantiation; but the popish doctors insisted, that this liberty subsisted no longer, since the church had defined the particular manner of this presence, in the council of Lateran. Thus they tried to change the state of the question, to deliver themselves from the cruel necessity of justifying blasphemy, and demonstrating contradictions, and to decide the merits of a cause, that could not be maintained, by those of another, that they thought might be so. In this, however, they were deceived, and instead of supporting transubstantiation by the authority of the church, they shook the authority of the church by employing it to this purpose, more than by all the other unworthy purposes to which it had been often prostituted. It was impossible to persuade men, that the church had any right to make new articles of faith, and of such a nature as this was especially, under the pretence of declaring those which the Scriptures had imposed on Christians: and since it was impossible to persuade, the same violence was used to force this article into general profession, that was employed in the case of Arianism. Nay, more blood has been shed, and the calamities brought on the world by these contests have been of longer duration than the others. They are not yet at an end.

SECT. XLI.

What has been said in this Essay, and nothing has been said which may not be easily justified, is sufficient to show, that none of the institutions contrived to preserve or restore peace among Christians have had this effect, even from the first. Those that the apostles made, concerning which though men talk much they know little, had it not. If the dissensions of christian congregations were such as did not break out to the eyes of the heathens, all was strife and contention within: and the state of christianity continued the same during those ages, when the government of the church had first a great mixture of democracy in it, and when it grew up afterward into a more aristocratical form. The evils strengthened under these forms, and grew quite intolerable under the monarchical. Under that government it became tyranny, and the whole system of christianity, which has been always making, and is not yet made uniform, became such a system of avarice and ambition, carried on by fraud and violence in their turns, that new abuses being still accumulated on old, it might have been disputed, whether christian flocks would not have fed themselves better without any pastors at all, and whether the peace of the world would not have been provided for better without any religion at all. It may be asked now, and I expect you should ask, in what par-

particulars the state of christianity has been mended to the honour of religion and to the good of mankind, since the last expedient designed for these purposes was laid aside by multitudes, and the pope was no longer the spiritual monarch of Christians, nor the centre of their union. The question is reasonable: and I will answer it very sincerely.

I think then, that the state of christianity has been mended to the honour of religion, and to the good of mankind, in some particulars, not in all: and that even they who remain in the papal communion have, in this respect, some obligation to those who have separated themselves from it. That so many nations withdrew in the sixteenth century from their subjection to the mock sovereignty and real tyranny of the pope, has been to the honour of religion surely; since the whole body of Christians is no longer obliged to acknowledge for vicar of Christ every man, however unworthy his character may be, whom the most corrupt college on Earth elects to that imaginary dignity, by a supposed inspiration of the Holy Ghost. It has been to the good of mankind surely, that the independency of the church on the state is taken away, in those countries that have renounced all allegiance to the powerful abettor of it, the pope; and that it is extremely reduced in those, that profess to hold the same allegiance still. It has been surely for the good of mankind, and for the honour of christianity, to show the world, that the law of God is immutable,

ble, like the author of it, and that orders, disciplines, rites, ceremonies, and acts of external devotion, means invented by men to maintain and propagate this law, are not only mutable in their nature, but necessary to be altered, on some occasions, in the course of human affairs. It was the more fit surely to convince men of these truths, since they had been led hoodwinked so long by the knavery of the religious society, that they began to think there was nothing immutable in religion so much as the means employed to support it, nor so little as the end. The wealth and grandeur of the clergy, and the superstition of the laity had been for more than fourteen hundred years the principal of these immutable means; and the experience of so long time had shown, that the means destroyed the end. They gave occasion to all that mischief which atheistical persons are so ready to impute to religion itself. Without these, disputes concerning doctrines of mere speculation would have made less noise and disturbance in the world, and enterprises of ambition could not have been supported as they have been. To diminish all these, therefore, and to remove an authority which often has, and always may stand in competition with the supreme authority of every society, are the first steps necessary to establish true religion, good government, and publick tranquillity.

As these steps were necessary, so they were just; for the wealth and grandeur of the church had been the free gift of the state originally, and they

they might be resumed, therefore, whenever they became hurtful, or even unnecessary, with as much justice and better policy than they were given. As to the other means, ignorance and superstition, though every thing necessary to constitute them was promoted, they were not directly avowed like the others. To pretend, that the church had a right to the former by compact, or by virtue of any alliance with the state, would be to say whatever comes uppermost in a whimsical head. To pretend, that the right to them is divine, may be ranked among a great number of absurd propositions, that are affirmed without proof: and bold affirmation had succeeded so well in this case, that he, who had asked for any other proof, than the authority of those who affirmed it, would have passed for absurd himself.

Again. Nothing can contribute more to the honour and advancement of christianity, than to reduce the preachers of it, as near as possible, to the terms of their original institution. Christ gave his apostles a commission to preach and to baptise, to convert men by the miracles they wrought, and to edify and build up in the faith such as they converted. It does not appear, that they, or their immediate successors, exceeded the bounds of this commission. This was their sole employment. The sole wealth they enjoyed, or claimed, was a voluntary contribution for their maintenance, in the churches which they visited, or wherein they resided: and how moderate this stipend was, may be collected from the practice of

of St. Paul, who took nothing from the Corinthians, but lived on what he earned by his trade. The sole power they enjoyed, or claimed, was that of reproving, and of delivering over to Satan, with the concurrence of the faithful, and not otherwise, such Christians as held false doctrines, or were guilty of enormous crimes. If any pious soul had foreseen, while christianity was the religion of a despised and persecuted sect, that it would be the religion of the empire, that emperors and empresses, kings and queens, would be raised up by God, to be the nursing fathers and mothers of his church, we may assure ourselves, that great expectations of preserving the faith pure and undefiled under such patronages, and of infusing universally the true spirit of christianity after such examples, would have been raised. But all the expectations of this pious soul would have been disappointed, as soon as the event happened; for then, on the contrary, the church got, but religion lost; the church was decorated, but religion was disgraced; the cause of one, and the cause of the other, were never more united in opinion, nor so distinct in reality. The nature of that revolution which Constantine made in the religion of the empire, and the place which this body of men had held in the christian church, while christianity was the profession of a sect, enabled them to take the lead, and to be the principal agents in it. Thus they fixed themselves at the head of the new establishment. Religion

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was made subservient to all their purposes, and the wealth and grandeur of the hierarchy were the principle objects of it. They were principal objects always, they were the sole objects at last: and during several ages that preceded immediately the reformation, the whole system of christianity, in our western world, was nothing better than a system of ecclesiastical fraud, working by superstition, and on it, under the direction of the bishops of Rome. Many saw this: all who saw it, and were not gainers by the iniquity, lamented it. Was it not time to make use of the first opportunity, which a favourable conjuncture offered, to assert the rights of the civil against the usurpations of the religious society? This was done in the sixteenth century. It had been attempted before: but the attempts had been vain, and even now they were various; for as ecclesiasticks had taken the lead in establishing, they took it in reforming christianity. They preserved much of their dignity, wealth, and authority in our church; less in that of Luther: less of the latter, in pretension and appearance at least, and none of the two former, in that of Calvin. The constitution of our church seems adapted to that of a great monarchy. The constitution of the Lutheran to those of the little princes and states of Germany. The constitution of Calvin's to the government of a little and poor republick. But popery was renounced in all, the superstitions of it were abolished, and

that

that spiritual tyrant was suffered no longer to encroach on civil sovereignty, nor to drain the wealth of these reformed nations into his coffers.

Another instance wherein the reformation has mended the state of christianity, to the honour of religion, and to the good of mankind, is this. Christianity retained it's name, as factions often do, when they have abandoned the principles that gained them reputation, or have perverted the best to the worst purposes, because the church of Rome professed to believe Christ to have been the Son of God, the Messiah, the Redeemer: but then, human authority had so controlled divine in the course of many ages, and had been blended with it so indiscriminately to the observation of men who were forbid to consult one, and were taught the duty of being implicit to the other, that this religion was no longer to be found in the Gospel, but in the canons of councils, the opinions of fathers, and the decrees of popes; authorities that must be contemptible in the eyes of every one who knows what councils, fathers, and popes have been, and who knows besides, that many of these canons, opinions, and decrees are either fictitious or corrupted. The first preachers of christianity could not have known it again. Many articles of faith must have appeared to them new; they would not have acknowledged many precepts to be evangelical, nor many institutions and ceremonies to be apostolical. They would have occasion often to say, much what Socrates said, when he heard the Lysis of Plato read.

In a word, and to finish up the picture, neither Peter nor Paul would have known how to administer even the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, unless they had gone first to some seminary of priests for instruction. Now this newfangled religion the reformation purged; tried it chiefly by the only true criterion of orthodoxy, the Gospel, and brought it much nearer to the plainness and simplicity of that which Christ instituted *.

The honour of his religion, so altered, so abused, and so defaced, required certainly, that it should be stripped

* I say in the text, much nearer to the plainness and simplicity of the Gospel of Christ; because it would not be true to say, intirely. All the reformed churches renounced their subjection to that of Rome, and asserted their independency. But some of them retained enough of her institutions, customs, and policy, to show, that they had been once members of that body. The churches who valued themselves for going the farthest, and who thought that they could never go too far, in opposition to that of Rome, Calvinists abroad, and their disciples, our Puritans at home, threw off at once, with the outward pomp of the ecclesiastical order, even the decency of forms in the publick worship. But then they assumed as great a licence in the interpretation of Scripture, as ever had been taken, and exercised as real an ecclesiastical tyranny, under another discipline, as the Roman clergy had ever exercised. By affecting to deduce their reformation from the most early times, when gifts of the Spirit were supposed to be common, they ran into enthusiasm; and genuine christianity took as many forms as whimsical teachers could invent. Our English reformers pursued a middle course. They retained much more of the hierarchical order: and when they had rejected many of those superstitious rites and ceremonies, which Vigilantius, a pious and

stripped of many rites, ceremonies, and customs, which favoured too strongly of heathenism and Judaism, or which had been invented manifestly with

and learned Spaniard, had censured, and which Jerom, an impudent and scurrilous † Hungarian, had defended a thousand years before, with all the ferocity of a modern Hussar, they thought it proper to go no farther, or very little farther, in this part of reformation, and fell, I think, into a greater absurdity in another. In that, I mean, which concerns the doctrines of artificial theology grafted on christianity by this very Jerom, and by the other fathers who went before him, as well as by those who followed after him, some in the third, others in the fourth and fifth centuries; when that art of enslaving mankind with words, to use an expression of my lord Bacon, was established: and when that, which this great man applies to philosophical knowledge, might be said truly of theological, that it became "an undigested heap and "collection of much faith and accident, mixed with an abun-"dance of childish notions imbibed in youth."

If we consider what motives our reformers, who boasted of restoring the purity of christianity, could have to keep open these springs from which so much of the impurity of that church whose communion they renounced had been derived; we shall find, I think, that they were two; ancient prejudices, and future hopes. They were averse to unlearn what they had been learning all their lives; and they were desirous to retain that preeminence, authority, and wealth, which they had enjoyed under the pope, and hoped to enjoy under the king. The church of Rome acts consistently, when she maintains

† N. B. Erasmus would make Jerom almost an Italian, because Stridon, the place of his birth, was not far from Italy. But he may be reckoned, more properly, an Hungarian; since this place was on the very confines of Hungary and Dalmatia,

with no other intention than that of multiplying superstitions, which helped to impose on the people, and were lucrative to the priests. The worship of images was of this number. A worship evidently derived from the heathens, as idolatrous among the vulgar, and not more easily distinguished out of idolatry by the learned men of new, than of old Rome. Such again was the use of the holy water, which your divines choose to derive from the water of purification among the Jews, and which might be derived as truly, perhaps, from the lustral water in use among the heathens. Such again were the consecration of altars, the celebration of jubilees, and other ex-

tains a veneration for the primitive fathers, who maintained the divine institution of an ecclesiastical order, and who invented so much superstitious worship, and so many sham miracles, to establish a sham christianity. But what could protestants mean, to maintain the authority of these ancient fathers, if they had not all the same purposes to serve? Let us acknowledge the truth. They had them not in the whole, but they had them in part: and for this reason they found it necessary to preserve the credit of fathers and councils, in part at least, and as far as they wanted their authority. When they wanted it no longer, or when it turned against them, they laid it aside most prudently. They builded up a new church, or modelled an old one, on principles, however inconsistent, that reconciled, in good measure, the ecclesiastical to the civil policy of their age and country: and they, who thought that a hierarchy and monarchy were necessary to support one another, which was the prevalent opinion of those times, could not have desired a more reasonable institution, than that which our English reformers made, under the direction, and by the authority of the civil power.

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ternal observances, which had been so avowedly taken from the ceremonial law of the Jews, that your writers do not scruple to justify them by passsages of the Pentateuch. In fine, and to quote an instance or two of the second sort; such was the invention of Purgatory, and of all the costly means to be delivered from it. Such was the abuse they made even of transubstantiation, which is so great an abuse in itself, that one would hardly think it could be abused by any additional circumstances, when it was established not only that priests could make God at any time, but that they might carry him about in a little box, wherever his presence was deemed necessary for publick show, or private devotion.

As the reformation exploded the doctrines relative to these and other superstitious practices, so would it have been much to the good of mankind, as well as to the honour of christianity, if silence on several others, which cause great dissension, had been imposed at the same time. But the contrary happened. The reformed fell out among themselves, and pursued one another with so much bitterness, that they gave no small colour to the pretended catholicks, to object to them, that they multiplied schisms, broke the bands of christian charity, and disturbed the peace of the christian world, which was better preserved in the communion of Rome. I do not mean to speak here of the disputes that arose among the reformed about religious ceremonies and church government, which were easy enough to be determined, or in-

different enough to be compounded, in their nature; how hard soever, or how important soever ecclesiastical obstinacy and the spirit of party made them appear. I mean to speak of those disputes that are in their nature not determinable; because there neither is, nor can be, any real determination of ideas about them: disputes that would be little thought of, or could do little hurt, if they remained undecided, and have done so much by dogmatical and contrary decisions. I might instance in several, in that of justification particularly, and of the doctrines dependent on it, concerning all which so much unintelligible jargon has been vainly employed by popish and protestant divines, and to as little purpose by the council of Trent. But I choose rather to instance in the case of the Lord's Supper. Of this we have spoken already, and it will serve better than any case less known, to show in what manner the reformers raised new disputes, left their followers exposed to all the mischief which theological questions have brought on the world, and the atheistical objection as much in force, as it was before the reformation they made.

They were not content, then, to have rendered transubstantiation as ridiculous and odious as it deserves to be esteemed: they went about to explain, each in his own way, this supposed or real mystery. They who believed there was no mystery in the eucharisty itself, how mysterious soever the occasion of this institution and the spiritual effects of it might be, should have talked, I think,

I think, of the bread as bread, and of the wine as wine, which Christians ate and drank in their communion to commemorate, by this ceremony, the death of Christ, and the redemption of mankind. They who believed there was a mystery in the eucharisty itself, and that the bread and wine were, after thanksgiving or consecration, something more than bread and wine, nor barely signs or symbols of the body and blood of Christ, should have avoided all definitions, instead of opposing definition to definition, and making that a mystery, which Christ had not made so. But they proceeded in a manner very different. They all acknowledged, if Zwinglius did, that the body and blood of Christ were truly received in this sacrament, as the Landgrave of Hesse declared to Granvelle and others, in a solemn conference at Spires *: and by this acknowledgement they put themselves under inextricable difficulties. Luther taught, that the body and blood of Christ were really in the elements of bread and wine, by a consubstantiation, which was said to last, if I mistake not, during the manducation only. Did the Calvinists talk a whit more intelligibly when they professed, at the famous conference at Poissy, "that in the sacra-
" ment of the Lord's Supper, Christ gives, pre-
" sents, and exhibits to us really the substance of
" his body and blood: that by faith we receive,
" really and in fact, the true and natural body

* Vid. Sleidan, l. 17.

" and blood of Christ, by virtue of the Holy " Ghost* ?" What did Beza mean when he talked of eating with the mouth of faith? He must mean, that he believed that he ate, or he must mean nothing? Now what did he believe, that he ate in the same sacrament? Not the symbolical body of Christ; for he affirmed, that he ate the true and natural body: not the true and natural body of Christ; for he affirmed that to be in Heaven and no where else. What then did he believe that he ate, or what other sense can be put on those words, " eating with the mouth of faith," and those " receiving by faith," than that of believing he ate, and believing he received? His adversaries held a great impiety, but they held it consistently. According to them, the body of Christ was in the sacrament by the charm of consecration, and they ate it when they ate the sacramental bread. According to Beza and his colleagues, the body of Christ was not there but in Heaven, and yet they ate it too, really and in fact. This conference broke up abruptly. The fools on one side accused the protestants of blaspheming, when they deny transubstantiation, just as the heathen reputed those philosophers atheists, who were not polytheists. The fools on the other remained convinced, that they ate, spiritually and with the mouth of faith, in this sacrament, a bodily substance that was not there; while they ate most corporeally a bodily substance, the bread,

* Aubigny Hist. Univers. l. 2.

that

that was there. Both went away, resolved to cut the throats of one another: and such are the effects of theology, that is, of human authority in matters of religion.

This authority has imposed chiefly, when it has imposed on the minds of men, by the abuse of words. This abuse of words makes the sum of metaphysicks and theology, imaginary sciences removed from the control as from the assistance of sense, conversant about hypothetical natures, and about ideas vastly complicated and perplexed. Such theology tinctured all the philosophy of Plato. Logick all that of Aristotle. These two schools were the great mints of insignificant terms; and though Zeno, who did little else than invent new words, and change the application of old, opened another mint of the same kind, yet the coin of the two former has been alone current. The immaterial forms, the eternal ideas, and all the incorporeal essences of Plato, for instance, were given and received in every philosophical payment, like the substantial forms, the intentional species, or the entelechy of Aristotle, till very lately.

I have often thought, that nothing could have happened more fortunately for the propagation of learned ignorance, than the succession of the Peripatetick to the Platonick philosophy; for though Aristotle opposed many opinions of his master, yet the subtilty of his logick has served to cover both his master's errours and his own, on more occasions, and at more periods, than one. No writings, certainly, were ever so mad as those of

of the latter Platonists, which contain the very quintessence of enthusiasm, and which are almost one perpetual abuse of reason and language. Many of the christian fathers came out of the same schools; and all of them using the same delirious style, it became that of christian theology. We must not imagine, however, that the philosophy of Aristotle had no share in framing the system of this theology, though that of Plato had the greatest and the earliest. It is true, that the original works of the former were unknown in the western church, till the fifteenth century, when Greek learning was brought into Italy by those who fled thither after the taking of Constantinople. But still Aristotle was at that time rather ill known than unknown; for in the very beginning of the thirteenth, a Latin translation had been made, by the direction of the emperor, Frederick the Second, of some parts of his writings from the Arabick version of them; and other fragments had appeared in the same language, such as might be expected, in those ages of ignorance, from men, among whom the Latin and Greek were become very barbarous languages; who understood ill the purity of one, and were little able to explain themselves properly and clearly in the other. If we go higher up, we find Aristotle much better known. He must have been so even by the first of the Greek fathers, and his reputation must have been great during all those ages, wherein so many of the corner stones of christian theology were laid; since he had commentators, themselves

themselves philosophers of great fame, among the Greeks, in the second, the third, the fourth, and the fifth centuries, Alexander Aphrodiseus, Themistius, and others. No doubt can be made of this; and if any doubt could be made, those nice distinctions, and that perpetual torture of words, for which fathers and councils were so famous, would be sufficient to prove it. They learned of Plato to talk without any meaning: and they learned, I think, of Aristotle, to seem sometimes to have one.

The logical empire of Aristotle, and the abuse of words, grew up with christian theology; but they were never absolutely confirmed till ignorance prevailed alike in the East and the West, from the ninth to the fifteenth century, when the first dawnings of knowledge began to appear, and men began to see their way in the farther acquisition of it. It may seem strange, but it is true, that the schools which were erected, and the encouragement which was given to learning from the days of Charles the Great, served only to keep men out of the way of true knowledge, and to impose a false appearance of it. The popes had procured chiefly the foundation of these schools: and the encouragement to the scholars had been derived from them, or through their means. I might have reckoned this among the artifices they employed to carry on their usurpations. Bare ignorance alone was not sufficient to their purpose. It was necessary to promote learned ignorance, and to establish errour with all the circumstances

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of authority and reverence; lest even the ignorant should stumble upon truth. To keep men from the search of it, they were told, that truth, and divine truths especially, were hard to find; that persons, on whose ability they might depend, were set apart, therefore, to save others the trouble of this search, and that their holy mother, the church, watched over all. Thus revelation and reason both were made the monopoly of the clergy. They doled out the former in such scraps, and under such interpretations, as they thought fit. They employed the latter, not to analyse, not to verify ideas, in order to compare them, but to take such as have been mentioned above, as it were on trust, like the vile instruments of errour: the instruments of errour indeed, since, how well soever these comparisons were made, nothing that was true, or complete and adequate, or distinct and clear, could result from them, and nothing, consequently, that deserved the name of knowledge. In short, they profaned and abused the two noblest gifts of God to man, natural reason and supernatural revelation.

Natural philosophy and mathematicks made little progress in these schools, experimental philosophy none at all. To turn and to wind the few notions they had a thousand ways, to distinguish imperceptible differences, to refine and subtilise a little real knowledge till it evaporated intirely, and nothing remained but a caput mortuum of words, was their whole business. John of Damascus had brought logick into fashion

among the Greek divines, and Boëtius among the Latins, long before the institution of these schools, and longer still before their doctors became famous under the name of scholasticks: so that whenever this happened, the same manner of philosophising on logical and metaphysical notions, and technical and insignificant terms, had prevailed in them from their foundation, and had been applied to theology. The men, who applied themselves to it, had some broken and superficial acquaintance with Aristotle at second hand, as we have observed that they might, and even at third hand; for much of it came to them through his Arabian interpreters and commentators: and as in every other science, so in theology, they were servilely attached to his principles and to his method. Some have placed Lanfranck, archbishop of Canterbury, at the head of the scholastick tribe, in the order of time: and if he wrote against Berenger, in the middle of the eleventh century, we may assure ourselves, that Aristotle's philosophy was employed then, as it has been since, to account for Christ's corporeal presence in the sacrament. It has been said, I know, that Peter the Lombard, a famous sholastick in the next century to Lanfranck, imitated and followed John of Damascus; though Erasmus and others have made a doubt whether he was the author of that work, which procured him the name of master of the sentences. But such criticisms are trifling as well as uncertain: for whether this writer, or his predecessor Lanfranck, imitated

John

John of Damascus or no; and whether Peter the Lombard, or Abelard, compiled the sentences, their theology was that of their age and of these schools, and their method was derived ultimately from Aristotle.

These schools continued in great fame, and produced in every age, during the course of many, a multitude of writers, some of whom were men of such extraordinary genius, that they might have enlightened, like so many suns, the orb of learning, and have carried human knowledge to the utmost bounds of human capacity. But instead of this, they served, like so many ignes fatui, to lead men backward and forward through the briars and thorns of vain speculations, within the narrow bounds that Aristotle set, as if truth was not to be found out of these. They checked the growth of true philosophy, by bringing into it no new materials from nature, and they corrupted true religion, by blending their philosophical speculations, and the vain subtilties of their logick, with divine truths. They thought that Aristotle had left a most complete and perfect system of philosophy. But they seemed to think, that Christ had left an incomplete and imperfect system of religion. To supply these defects, they made summaries of christian theology, to say nothing of sentences of the fathers, and * tedious com-

* N. B. The Exposition of St. Matthew's Gospel takes up, I think, ninety homilies, and that of St. John eighty-seven, in the works of Chrysostom.

mentaries

mentaries on them, of commentaries on the Bible, of theological questions and cases of conscience, that are much larger than all the Scriptures canonical and apocryphal, and in comparison of which the Gospels, nay the whole New Testament is but a pocketbook: though the pocketbook ought to contain every one of these folios, and none of them are excusable for containing more than one pocketbook. I have touched so often already the absurdity, and, as I think, the iniquity of seeking christianity out of the Gospel, of making any criterion of natural religion but the works, or any criterion of revealed religion but the Word of God, that I should say nothing here concerning the last, if I had not often found an answer to it insisted on with a silly air of triumph, by dogmatical persons, in their conversation and in writing. What do you complain of, say these persons? Is not the system of christianity in the same case with every other system of laws particularly? Yes; and that is the very thing I complain of. A system of human law and human policy is the product of human understanding, and therefore incomplete and imperfect, liable to different constructions at all times, and fit to be altered at some. But this cannot be said, without blasphemy, of the christian dispensation; though it has been muttered by some divines, and has been strongly implied by the whole conduct of the christian church. What is made by man may be explained, supplied, altered, and improved by man. But has the Word

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of God, spoken to all mankind, need to be explained by any man, or by any order of men, who have as little pretence to be thought inspired, as those who are not of their order? Can any human authority supply, or alter, and much less improve, what the Son of God, God himself, came on Earth to reveal? Again, is there no difference between my being led into errour by human authority, which I know to be human, and by human authority, which I take to be divine? To take the laws of God for the laws of man, is impious. But is it less so, to impose the laws of man for the laws of God? Surely it is much more so: as one may be impiety without design, and the other must be premeditated.

It is notorious, that many great points of christian faith and doctrine were first taught, or first determined, several ages after the immediate disciples of Christ were dead, on the authority of tradition alone, till there was a canon of Scriptures; and on tradition and them, when there was one. The trinity, the coeternity, the coequality, in a word, the sameness of the Son with the Father, the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, the fires of Purgatory, and the real corporal presence of Christ in the eucharisty, to mention no more, were of this number. It was lawful to dispute about them all, till the church had decided. Nay Erasmus* is so indulgent as to doubt if it was heretical in

* Symb. Catech. 4to.

Origen,

Origen, to make a question whether "the Son and "the Holy Ghost are of the same divine essence "with the Father, or whether they are only crea-"tures more excellent than all other creatures." After the church, that is, certain assemblies of ecclesiasticks, had decided and decreed, "post "evulgatam ecclesiæ sententiam," it was lawful to doubt no longer, nor to dispute about any of these points, "ambigere fas non est." They were become articles of faith. They were made such then by these decisions and decrees. They were made such then by human authority. Not at all, says Erasmus, or any other divine. They were made such by the Scriptures. Whatever is not agreeable to them, is not of Christ*; and therefore false interpretations of the Scriptures are to be rectified by such as are true†. Now those which the church makes are true: and it is enough for you, and such as you are, to believe firmly all that the church has declared to be necessary‡. Roundly asserted indeed, but very fallaciously argued; for whether the interpretations of the church are true, which is assumed, or whether they are false, which is possible, the doctrines established on them are established on human, not on divine authority. The Scripture is the Word of God. The interpretation is the

* Quod aberrat a sacris voluminibus, non est Christi. ibid.

† Falsa Scripturarum interpretatio verâ interpretatione refutanda est. ibid.

‡ Tibi tuique similibus satis est ea constanti tenere fide, quæ pro necessariis exserte et expresse tradit ecclesia. ibid.

word of man. But besides, I learn from that judicious and orthodox divine, Mr. Hooker*, and Erasmus and others of the same tribe speak to the same effect, that all the things necessary to salvation are not necessary to be contained, and set down in plain terms, in the Scriptures. It is sufficient, that they be comprehended in such sort, that by reason we may conclude from the Scriptures all things which are necessary; from whence I conclude just as I did before, that the great points spoken of have been established on human, not on divine authority; deduced, collected by reason, or what has been called reason; not expressly taught by revelation.

That these great points of christian faith and doctrine were not very evidently deduced, nor very accurately collected from the Scriptures, may be presumed from the disputes that have been always, and that still subsist about them. It might be proved too, that Scripture is not so favourable in many cases, nor more so in any one, to these opinions, than to those that stand in opposition to them; and that the only advantage which the Athanasians, or the Augustinians, for instance, have over the Arians or the Semipelagians, is not an advantage which the Scripture gives them. They derive it from the suffrages of particular men, whose motives were often not intirely christian, and from the arbitrary dogmas of fathers and decrees of councils. These opinions,

* Ec. Pol. lib. 1.

therefore,

therefore, that are become articles of faith, and that pass for some of the doctrines which Christ taught, though they are nothing more than inventions of fathers improved by schoolmen, may be quoted as so many particular instances of theological presumption, and, I think, impiety *. But call

* There have been some divines a little more modest than others, since there are some, I think, who have seemed ashamed of their artificial theology, and have endeavoured to excuse, rather than defend the fathers of their church. The fathers, it has been said, taught the doctrines of christianity in their genuine purity, and affected to teach them no otherwise. The hereticks forced them to abandon this pious reserve, in order to defeat the designs of these men, who attempted daily to introduce errours in opinion and practice. Now if this was the case in general, it may have been such even of St. Paul, who was the father of the fathers; and his Gospel may have been writ with the same spirit of contradiction and of dispute. But it is impossible to discover, with certainty, on what points, and in what degrees artificial theology gave occasion to heresy, or heresy to artificial theology; though we know, in some measure, what the disputes were, that arose in the christian church. The doctrines that were termed afterward orthodox, or heretical, were in their origin, no doubt, coeval, and both grew up together, till one outgrew the other. In general, the orthodox fathers had no advantage over the others. If the former had recourse to tradition, so had the latter: and the former were not, certainly, superior to the latter either in learning, or in means of knowledge, or in sanctity of life, great foundations of credibility in such cases as these. Arius, for instance, or Nestorius, to mention no more, were in all these respects at least equal to Athanasius or Cyril: and whoever examines the partial accounts of one side alone, for we have none of the other, of all that passed in the disputes that arose whether the Son was

call it which you please, or what you please, the proceeding grew more general and more systematical in the schools that have been mentioned. They did not take this license with particular points of doctrine alone, but with the whole system of christianity. They melted down the whole mass with all the alloy that had been already added to it by others, and they cast it anew with an immense deal of their own. They made it so voluminous, that it was no longer useful: and Erasmus might well say? "quis possit Aquinatis "secundæ secundam circumferre *?" They perplexed it with so many bold and indeterminable questions about the divine nature and operations, with so many serious trifles, with so many minute questions about formalities, quiddities, and other fantastical notions, that it grew contentious, and more than ever hurtful. In short, they multiplied distinctions and definitions till their manner became as unintelligible as their matter: and my lord Bacon might have added scholastick theology to the sciences that sway the imagination more than the reason, such as astrology, natural magick,

stantial with the Father, and whether the Virgin Mary was properly the mother of God, will find great reason to believe, that the two hereticks were not the least respectable doctors of the four. Thus we shall be apt to think, if we consult not only ancient memorials, but the writings of modern divines, and suffer ourselves neither to be amused by arbitrary epithets, and vague declamations, in which the modern imitate the ancient fathers, nor to be perplexed by sophistical arguments, in which they sometimes imitate the schoolmen.

* Ep. 329.

and

and alchemy. If the first pretends to discover the influence of superior or inferior bodies, this theology pretended to discover the influence of superior on inferior spirits, by illuminations, inspirations, and the internal action of grace. If the second pretends to reduce natural philosophy from speculation to works, this theology pretended to deduce the duties of man from speculations concerning the moral attributes of God, and to instruct him in the imitation of God. If the third pretends to separate dissimilar, and to throw out heterogeneous parts of bodies, to cleanse such as are impure, and to perfect such as are immature, this theology pretended to perform much the same operations on ideas, notions, terms. These the professors of it confounded, and distinguished, at their pleasure, and like chemists or apothecaries, made new out of old, old out of new, one out of many, and many out of one*. Nay, this comparison may be carried farther. The scholastick divines rendered their art, for such it was rather than a science, as incomprehensible as they could, that they might make a greater profit, and acquire a greater reputation by it, among the ignorant.

In this manner, and by the help of these schools, a theological system, which had no intention to promote the true and holy purposes of

* ——— Pharmacopolarum ritu, ex novis vetera, ex veteribus nova, è pluribus unum, ex uno plura subinde fingentium et refingentium. Eras. ibid.

christianity, was imposed on an ignorant and superstitious world for the very religion which Christ had instituted, and his disciples had propagated. The sole intention and the sole effect of it was to establish an ecclesiastical empire, under that spiritual monarch the pope, and his spiritual ministers the clergy. This was the effect of that supposed alliance between the church and the state. An effect so natural, that he who pleads for any right in a church, or ecclesiastical order, independent on the state, may be justly supposed to mean this effect, in some degree, and under some form or other. The first foundations of this empire were laid in private, the second only in publick conscience. To secure this empire, therefore, it was necessary to keep the first intirely and exclusively in the hands of the pope and the clergy, and whatever influence the civil power might, on some occasions, gain over the latter, to take effectual care, that it should never be able to gain any over the former. Now nothing either did or could contribute more to this great principle of policy than the conduct of these schools. By wrapping up both natural and revealed religion in the obscurity of metaphysicks and of logick, they made themselves the sole judges of both. By sending abroad their disciples, under the characters of confessors, directors, casuists, inquisitors, preachers, they had sure means of exercising their judgments, instilling what opinions, and raising what passions, the permanent and occasional, the immediate or remote interests

rests of the church required. The first duty of the religion these doctors propagated was to believe what the church believed: and what the church believed, they alone had a right to declare. The second duty of this religion was to observe all the ceremonies, and to perform all the external acts of devotion and worship, that the church had instituted, or should institute. The third and least was the practice of morality. On the first there was no mitigation nor indulgence. Men were to believe implicitly, or to be treated as enemies to God and to his church in this world, and to be damned eternally in the other. On the second and the third much indulgence was shown. It was even profuse on the third. Compositions with the church might be made on both, on the breach of her own laws, and on the breach of those of God and nature: and these compositions were so often pecuniary, especially on the breach of the last, that while the church was enriched, no layman, who had money enough to save his soul, could be damned. But there was something still more favourable to vice in the last case. The duties which the church exacted were so particular, that they could not, and they cost so little to perform, that they did not deserve to be, explained away. But the duties of morality were more general, and more liable, by variety of circumstances, to different modifications, in the application of them, as they were much harder to be observed strictly amid the infirmities of human nature. Casuists therefore interposed. They

lightened the burden in favour of these infirmities; by all the definitions, distinctions, and exceptions, that logick could furnish. They did more. In all cases where the church was concerned, they gave full range to the passions of mankind. Justice was no longer a moral virtue. Faith was not to be kept with hereticks. Benevolence or charity were no longer principles of natural or revealed religion. Hereticks or excommunicated persons were to be persecuted and exterminated with the most unrelenting fury: and I may defy any man to show instances of greater inhumanity, and more profligate wickedness, committed by the ferocity of lawless savages, or barbarous nations, than I am able to show of those which have been committed, not only under the veil of this spurious christianity, but on motives taken from it, and at the instigation of those who taught it. By such means, and with such effects as these, was an ecclesiastical empire maintained during several ages, while churchmen governed conscience of every kind, and by governing conscience governed the world.

The scholasticks had indeed many contests among themselves, that were carried on with great animosity, and broke out sometimes into open violence. Such, for instance, was the dispute between the Thomists and the Scotists about the immaculate conception of the Virgin, and that between the nominalists and the realists about the nature of universals. How could these disputes, or any other, be determined among men, whose pleasure

pleasure and whose pride it was to dispute perpetually, and who cultivated an art, that was of use to no man in the discernment of truth, but might help the subtile dialectician to pose even the man he could not refute? These disputes, however, were kept among themselves, by the policy, not by the moderation of scholasticks certainly: and as long as they neither rent the theological system, nor shook the ecclesiastical empire, the court of Rome tempered, managed, and suffered them, notwithstanding all the scandals they occasioned, in the universities of Oxford and of Paris particularly. But as soon as our Ockham, the invincible doctor, began to maintain, that the ecclesiastical jurisdiction ought to be subject to the civil, the nominalists were reputed hereticks, and the realists alone passed for orthodox. There was as little union among these as among the others, and religion might seem to be more nearly concerned in their disputes. But the great purpose, for which all these schools were erected, being the support of the ecclesiastical empire, any doctrines that reduced, or weakened it, were the greatest of heresies. This happened in the fourteenth century, when Wickliff went much farther than Ockham, and laid the axe to the root of a tree, which the popes had watered with so much care and expense, and which bore so much bitter fruit; so that if the impertinent philosophy and profane theology of the schools took their rise in our country, from Lanfranck, Ruccline, Swineshead, and Ockham,

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we may boast that some of the first and greatest advances towards a reformation of both were made by men of our country likewise.

From the time that Ockham had signalised himself, in a publick dispute at Avignon, in favour of the emperors and the civil power against the popes and the ecclesiastical jurisdiction, the nominalists were not only more than ever opposed by the other scholasticks, the Scotists especially, but so persecuted by the court of Rome, and all the fautors of her usurpations, that their whole doctrine was condemned by Lewis the Eleventh, in a publick edict, before the end of the fifteenth century*. The doctors and masters of the university of Paris, for the scholasticks too, as well as the rabbins, had the title of masters, were obliged to renounce the name with the doctrine of that sect, and all their books were burned, according to the laudable precaution of the orthodox. The realists, on the other side, were recommended, and nothing was neglected on this and every other occasion, that might keep these schools firmly attached to a cause, which they had been principal instruments of imposing on the world, for the cause of christian religion. These efforts, however, proved insufficient. The papal throne was shook, and ecclesiastical empire was in a visible decline. Scholastick divines had supported it, in the opinion of mankind, as long as they were favoured by general ignorance even

* Morhof Polyhis.

greater

greater than their own. But as soon as learning began to dawn, toward the beginning of the sixteenth century, these birds of night were forced to fly from day, though they screeched and clapped their wings for a while. It was in vain, that modern scholasticks prostituted learning, as their predecessors had prostituted genius, to maintain the credit of this theology, and the papal authority connected with it. The task was too hard even for the council of Trent, and for all the great men who have undertaken it since. Nothing supports the system now, except general ignorance in some countries, and the force of civil, abetting ecclesiastical power, on principles of political consideration among those who are not ignorant. Many a man thinks, many such I have known, that the theology of the schools is absurd, that the monarchy of the pope, though reduced, is still impertinent and hurtful, and that the abuses of wealth and power in the church are intolerable. But yet, the same man will contend, that it is better to bear, than to attempt a reformation of evils, that are grown inveterate, and will think that he is strong, when he quotes not only the disorders, the wars, and the massacres, which attended and followed the reformation in the sixteenth century, but the several ridiculous and mad sects, to the rise of which this reformation gave occasion, though the reformers condemned them.

I have heard men of good parts and good intentions reason in this manner; I have heard it said by a very respectable man in the Gallican

church, when he excused, rather than defended, submission to the papal power, that this power is the keystone of that arch, whereon the whole christian system rests, and that the whole building must fall, if the keystone be taken away. I have heard another of the same church, and of the same character, advance, that many things absurd in belief, and ridiculous in practice, were necessary to attach the greatest number of men and women, and especially of the vulgar, to christianity; that men of sense and knowledge ascribed to these doctrines and institutions as little as they deserved, but that men of sense and knowledge ought to consider and distinguish what is for them, and what for the vulgar; that this cannot be done in outward profession, but that every man of sense and knowledge may do it for himself, and should therefore bear with any useful deception. Much may be said in favour of this political reasoning, and much may be said against it. It might have been better, perhaps, if it had been practicable, to reform, as Erasmus would have done, than as Luther did. I shall not enter into the controversy. But this I say. Such instances as have been given confirm the whole drift of this Essay, because they show the mischievous consequences of theology, by which an order of men have been able to usurp on God, if I may use the expression, as well as on man, to propagate their own inventions for his revelations, and to assume an authority, to which they have no right, over all the other orders of society; till

till the fraud and the usurpation were so established, that it was not possible to reject them without falling into some of those calamities, which the establishment of them had cost mankind. A melancholy alternative surely, and yet such a one, that the love of truth, the spirit of liberty, and an awful respect for the Supreme Being, ought to determine men to take their resolution in it. When Luther, and Calvin, and the other reformers took their resolutions, it must not be denied, that affections, and passions, and private interests, had their share, as well as the other motives, in determining them to it. Such will be the case in all human enterprises, even in the best, and, therefore, the issues, even of the best, are always imperfect. Our reformers shook off intirely the papal yoke, they laid aside and exposed many false traditions and unchristian doctrines. But our reformers had some of the prejudices, and much of the spirit of the schools about them: and he* was not in the wrong, perhaps, who made the scholastick chronology begin at Lanfranck and end at Luther; though many of your divines and of ours have talked the same gibberish since, and talk it still.

May we not compare the great revolution which happened in the Roman church, to that which happened in the Roman empire? The empire broke to pieces, some of the provinces became distinct states, asserted their independency, and

* Morhof Polyhis.

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acknowledged no longer the imperial authority, nor the laws of the empire. But in all these new constitutions, there was some tincture of the old, some principles of law, and some of policy, which bore a near resemblance to it. Thus, in the constitutions of our reformed churches, though they were independent on that of Rome, something remained to show, that they had been once members of that body, as much as they differed now in doctrine and discipline. The church of Rome shut up the Bible from the laity. The reformed churches opened it, and declared, that the pure Word of God was the sole test of true religion, and the sole foundation of theirs. That it is the true, the sole, and the sufficient test of christian religion must be owned; for if it was not, it could not be the Word of God, nor christianity the religion of God. But is it certain, that this word has been made the sole foundation of our reformed religions? I apprehend it is not. Nay, since, to speak properly, I must say religions, it cannot have been made such. The Word of God is one, and one religion alone can be taught by it. If there are different religions raised, there must have been different foundations laid. How are we to account for this? We must acknowledge the truth. Human authority has passed for divine, though not so coercively in our churches as in yours, and the uncertain, variable word of man, for the infallible, invariable Word of God. We freed ourselves from spiritual tyranny, and we fell into spiritual anarchy. The change however

ever, was advantageous; since there is, in the nature of things, and has been in this case, a transition, through confusion, into order; whereas there is no immediate transition from established tyranny into a settled state of liberty.

Before the reformation, Christians knew nothing of the Bible more than the church told them. It might, and it might not be a rule to the pastors, but it was none to the flocks. After the reformation, it was put into the hands of every one. The pastors appealed to it, and the flocks were supposed to judge for themselves by it. What happened? The very same thing that happened in the primitive church, before any canon of Scripture was made by publick authority, and received by common consent. Various traditions and various doctrines of men, who pretended alike to the gifts of the spirit, divided the faithful, and every teacher had his followers. Just so at the reformation, various interpretations of authentick Scriptures, and various comments upon them, divided the reformers and the reformed. Every teacher had his followers, and some of these affected to preach as well as pray by the spirit. Ambiguous and obscure expressions in the text had the same effect as no text at all, and modern theology broke the uniformity of religion as much as ancient, caused as much desolation, and spilled as much blood. The reformed churches persecuted one another, and your church persecuted them all. Atheistical persons, therefore, continue to take the pretence, which every religion gives

gives them, to confound religion and theology, and to ascribe to the former all the evils that are due to the latter.

It is natural to ask, can nothing be done to remove this scandal, by putting an end to these evils? I will presume to answer, nothing; unless men can be prevailed upon to assume the spirit of christianity as well as the name of Christians; and this will be found, I suppose, impracticable, as long as the sole care of religion, and the sole direction of conscience is confined every where to a distinct order of men, whose distinct interests, and whose passions, of course, carry them to keep these dissensions and feuds alive. If they were content to explain what they understand, to adore what they understand not, to leave in mystery all that Christ and his apostles have left so, to a time that is not yet come, and to teach others to content themselves with natural theology, and such revealed theology as this; the evil spoken of would soon cease, and the scandal consequently. If they proceeded in this manner, there would be ample matter left to employ their tongues and their pens, and none to employ the swords and daggers of the rest of mankind. The law of God would be a plain and consistent law, and no colour would remain for infidels to form this argument: "Either the "Scriptures do not contain the law of God, or it "was not the intention of God to promote the "peace and happiness of mankind, or he did "not proportion the means to his end:" every one

one of which propositions is blasphemy, and yet, as theology has corrupted genuine christianity, it will be hard to evade them all.

But since such a change as this may be wished for by good men, rather than expected by any man, it is proper to consider what can be done to lessen an irremediable evil, and whether good policy can furnish an antidote against the poison of theology; on which I shall say a word or two, before I finish this long Essay. There are arguments, no doubt, even of the political kind, and of irresistible force, against atheists, who reject all religion; latitudinarians, who admit all alike; and rigidists, who suffer one alone. If the first prevail, there will be no religious conscience at all; if the second, there will be as many as there are religious sects in every society; if the third, persecution for religion will be made a maxim of government, as it is made in some countries, to the bane of society, and to the shame of the christian profession. Do there remain then no means to prevent the fatal effects of theological disputes, and ecclesiastical quarrels? Some countries are so miserable, by principles of bigotry incorporated with those of their government, and by the establishment of inquisitions, that there remain no such means, but by the total extirpation of al those who differ, or who are suspected to differ, from the established doctrines. In other countries, though a rigid spirit prevails, yet if inquisitions are not established, and if ecclesiasticks do not govern, it is

very possible by skill and management to allay, for the most part, the ferments which theology is apt to raise in the state, and to blunt the fury of those who call themselves orthodox, and every man who dissents in opinion from them heretical. In countries where this rigid spirit is not that of the government, though dissension cannot be entirely prevented, the bad influence and effects of it may. To make government effectual to all the good purposes of it, there must be a religion; this religion must be national; and this national religion must be maintained in reputation and reverence; all other religions or sects must be kept too low to become the rivals of it. These are, in my apprehension, first principles of good policy. The establishment of a religious order subject to the civil magistrate, and subservient to the civil power, not that of a religious society pretending to be the allies and aiming to be the masters of the civil, may be reconciled very well to these principles, and sure I am, that they may be pursued, not only without persecution, but without the invasion of any one right, which men can justly claim under the freest and most equitable government. The parliament of one thousand six hundred and forty-one declared, that human laws cannot bind conscience; which is a declaration every sect makes out of power, and none observe willingly in it. But be it so. Human laws, however, may, and ought to exclude those men from power in the state, kings especially, who profess a private conscience repugnant to

the publick conscience of that state. Such men will make use of power, and the better men they are, the more, to propagate their own schemes of religion, to strengthen their own party, and to recommend their particular notions about ecclesiastical government, which cannot be done without manifest danger to the publick peace. The wisdom of our constitution has therefore joined admirably well together the two most compatible things in the world, how incompatible soever they may have been represented, a test and a toleration; and by rejecting alike the principles of latitudinarians and rigidists, has gone far to prevent those evils, that gave occasion to the objection of atheists: as I hope that I have done in this Essay, to prove, by considering the nature, rise, progress, and effects of Authority in Matters of Religion, that theology has been always liable to this objection, christianity never. Christianity, genuine christianity, is contained in the Gospels; it is the Word of God; it requires, therefore, our veneration, and a strict conformity to it. Traditional christianity, or that artificial theology which passes for genuine, and which we all profess, is derived from the writings of fathers and doctors of the church, and from the decrees of councils. It is, therefore, the word of men, and of men, for the most part, either very weak, very mad, or very knavish. It requires, therefore, no regard, nor any inward conformity to it. You have, I know, at your elbow a very foul mouthed and a very trifling critick, who will endeavour

to impose upon you on this occasion, as he did on a former. He will tell you again, that I contradict myself, and that by going about to destroy the authority of the fathers and the church, which I reject, I go about to destroy the authenticity of the Gospels, which I admit. But if the dogmatical pedant should make this objection, be pleased to give him this answer; that I do, indeed, admit the Gospels, not on the testimony of the Spirit, like Calvin, but on that of the fathers and doctors of the church, who not only bear this testimony separately; but, assembled in a council at Laodicea, rejecting many other Gospels, made a canon of these: and yet, that his objection is impertinent, since I may receive the Gospels on the credit of these men, of whom I think very little better than I do of him, for authentick Scriptures, just as well as he receives the books of the Old Testament, concerning which he has started so many idle paradoxes, for such, on the credit of the Jews, though he rejects their oral law, and the fabulous traditions of their rabbins. Thus I shall conclude this long Essay, wherein I have recalled the sum of what I have said to you in conversation, and which has, I fear, too much of the loose and wandering air of conversation.

FRAGMENTS

OR

MINUTES OF ESSAYS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE foregoing Essays, if they may deserve even that name, and the Fragments, or Minutes, that follow, were thrown upon paper in Mr. Pope's lifetime, and at his desire. They were all communicated to him in scraps, as they were occasionally writ. But the latter not having been connected and put together under different heads, and in the same order as the former had been, before his death, if that may be called order; I have contented myself to correct and extend them a little, and to leave them as Fragments, or Minutes, in the form in which they appear, though they might be styled Essays with no more impropriety than those which precede them. They are all nothing more than repetitions of conversations often interrupted, often renewed, and often carried on a little confusedly. The opinions I held are exposed as clearly as they ought to be by a man who thinks his opinions founded in truth. I thought, and I think still, that mine were so. The more important, therefore, the subjects are, the more necessary it seemed to me not to disguise the truth, especially to friends not easy to be scandalised, even when their own opinions and prejudices were frequently contradicted, and on occasions when freedom of speech could be neither indecent nor hurtful. It could be neither indecent nor hurtful to these friends; nor will it be so, I hope, to those into whose hands these papers may fall after my death.

FRAGMENTS,

OR

MINUTES OF ESSAYS.

I.

I HAVE read again Dr. Cudworth's posthumous treatise, concerning eternal and immutable morality,* which you sent me long ago: and, since you ask my opinion of it now, I shall take some notice of those, which this very learned author defends on two subjects, the nature of human knowledge, and the principles of natural religion. On the first I have writ to you already, and on the last, you know that I intend to write to you. On both of these I differ widely from the doctor, and am very far from finding any thing in this treatise, which can induce me, in the least degree, to change my way of thinking. On the contrary, the great principle on which he proceeds seems to me of the utmost absurdity, and the consequences deducible from it at least as dangerous, perhaps more so, to the foundation of all religion, than the consequences that flow from the doctrines he opposes.

* Published 1731, forty three years after the author's death.

Cudworth enters into the dispute between Descartes and his opposers, who have triumphed exceedingly over him for saying, "I do not think "that the essences of things, and those mathema- "tical truths which can be known of them, are "independent on God; but I think, however, "that they are immutable and eternal, because "God willed and ordered it should be so." It is more probable, and it is more candid to believe, that this philosopher was in earnest, than that he was in jest, when he advanced this proposition. He might think, that he took the best, if not the strongest side in dispute, and approve his own intention in the choice he made; as it deserves to be approved by every sincere theist, and modest inquirer, into matters of the first philosophy, even by those who are not of his mind.

If Descartes was to arise, and to answer for himself, might he not distinguish between immutable and independent? Might he not say, that these truths are immutable, because they affirm what is conformable to that universal nature, whereof God is the author, as he is of that intelligence by which they are perceived: and that they are therefore, in a proper sense, both immutable and dependent? immutable, as much as the nature is to which they belong; dependent, on that Being by whose energy this nature began to exist, and is preserved. He might own himself afraid to assert, notwithstanding the decision of schoolmen, or the decrees of councils, that there can be any entity whatever, or any thing in any being what-

whatever, which is independent on God. He might lament his own fate, to be accused of atheism, because he employed, in physical hypotheses, matter and motion alone; though he always supposed a first mover, and had proved, by a demonstration he thought good, the existence of an all-perfect Being: and to be thus accused by men, who presume to maintain, that they have other objects of knowledge, beside the existence of an all-perfect Being, which exist by the necessity of their own natures, and independently on him. He would reject most certainly, with some of that sourness which he had in his temper as well as in his countenance, the imputation of betaking himself to a pitiful evasion. He would show, with great force, that his apprehension of admitting any thing independent on God into the corporeal or intellectual system is a most reasonable apprehension, and no bugbear, as the doctor calls it. He might show, perhaps, the profane consequences of such metaphysicks as the doctor's, by citing, among others, this assertion from the treatise we speak of here; "the "eternal and immutable wisdom in the mind of "God is thence participated by created beings, "independent upon the will of God." He might insist, that, since "the wisdom of God is "as much God as the will of God," and the will, by consequence, as the wisdom, it is absurd to distinguish them; and that it is something worse than absurd to reason about the divine, as we reason about the human intellect,

lect, to divide and parcel out the former on the plan of the latter. If the will of man is blind, dark, plumbean, flexible, and liable to be seduced, is the will of God to be conceived in like manner? And if it is not, why are we led to conclude, that a superior faculty is necessary to determine it, as the judgment of reason does, or should determine that of man? The ancients thought matter eternal, and assumed, that the Demiurgus, or divine architect, composed the frame of the world with materials which were ready prepared, and independently on him, in a confused chaos. Much in the same manner, such metaphysicians as the learned Cudworth have imagined a sort of intellectual chaos, a chaos of eternal ideas, of incorporeal essences, independent on God, selfexistent, and therefore coeval with the Supreme Being, and therefore anterior to all other natures. In this intellectual chaos God sees, and man must endeavour to see, the natures, the real essences of things: and thus the foundations of morality are laid higher than the existence of any moral agents, before there was any system of being, from which the obligations to it could result, or to which they could be applied: just as the same philosophers suppose the incorporeal essences of white and black, for instance, to have existed when there was no such thing as colour, and those of a square and circle, when there was neither form nor figure.

Descartes would have broke off the dispute by acknowledging, what he had acknowledged before,

fore, that "all these things are unintelligible to "us," and that, by consequence, all dispute about them is impertinent. I should have gone away confirmed in my opinion, that there is nothing, in any kind of being, which does not depend on the supreme, immense, allperfect Being, nor any nature which does not depend on the Author of all nature; though I felt, at the same time, the difficulty of maintaining this opinion by argument. Mr. Locke observes how impossible it is for us to conceive certain relations, habitudes, and connections, visibly included in some of our ideas, to be separable from them, even by infinite power. Let us observe, on this occasion, how impossible, or at least how extremely difficult it is for us to separate the idea of eternity from certain mathematical and moral truths, as well as from such as are called necessary, and are selfevident on one hand: and, on the other, how impossible it is to conceive, that truths should exist before the things to which they are relative; or particular natures and essences, before the system of universal nature, and when there was no being but the superessential Being.

God knew, from all eternity, every system, corporeal and intellectual, that he created in time. He knew, by consequence, for he ordered, the various manners in which all the parts of these systems, and the systems themselves, should operate on one another, the relations they should have, the proportions they should bear, the ideas they should communicate to creatures fitted to re-

ceive them, and capable of knowing only by them. All this he foreknew; but all this did not therefore exist: such an existence was at most eventual, and depended on the will, not the knowledge of God; if we may distinguish them, to be a little more intelligible. These immaterial forms and essences, if any such there were, and these immutable truths, for such there are most certainly, could not begin to exist, in any proper sense, till those systems of nature, to which the former are said to belong, and from which the latter do manifestly result, were called into actuality: and, in short, I cannot persuade myself, that Descartes asserted without good reason, though he has been much censured for asserting it, that God is the author of the essence, as well as of the existence of all that he created*.

If

* What I have been led to say on this occasion makes it necessary to explain myself a little more fully; for though I dare not assert, like metaphysical divines of your and my communion, that the essences of things are, in a strict and proper sense, independent on God, any more than their existence; nor am able to conceive a dependency of existences or beings, and an independency of essences or manners of being; yet am I far from assenting to Descartes in all he has advanced on this subject, and on matters relative to it. He has pushed hypothesis, and even truth itself into chimera. There is a sort of knight-errantry in philosophy as well as in arms. The end proposed by both is laudable; for nothing can be so more than to redress wrongs, and to correct errours. But when imagination is let loose, and the brain is overheated, wrongs may be redressed by new wrongs, errours may be corrected by new errours. The cause of innocence may be ill

defended

If what has been said should be called hypothetical, it must be allowed to be less so, and, at the same time, to convey to the mind ideas and notions

defended by heroes of one sort, and that of truth by heroes of another. Such was Don Quixote, such was Descartes; and the imaginary character of one, and the real character of the other, gave occasion to the two most ingenious satirical romances that ever were writ.

In one of these, a Chinese Mandarin meets some disciples of this philosopher, as they travelled through the moon to those imaginary spaces, to that third Heaven, where his thinking substance was employed in building a new world, or the model of a world, on his own principles of matter and motion, while his extended substance lay buried at Stockholm, or at Paris. The Mandarin had contracted acquaintance with father Marsenne in a former journey, had read the metaphysical meditations, was instructed in this part at least of the Cartesian philosophy, and the judgment he made of it I own to be mine. It contains opinions, that seem to my apprehension most evidently false, and paralogisms so much oftener than demonstrations, that, when I am of the same mind, I am so frequently for reasons different from his, and even contrary to them. Thus, for instance, I take it to be evidently false, that we have certainty of knowledge whenever we have clear and distinct ideas of any thing. Our ideas are often clear and distinct, and at the same time fantastical. Examples may be brought of such as we receive immediately and passively from outward objects, and of such as the mind frames by it's own activity; for that which Gassendi acknowledges of himself, in his objections to the third meditation of Descartes, must have been alike true of others. Many things had seemed to him so clear and distinct, that he held them for undoubted geometrical truths, which he was obliged afterward, and on a further examination, to reject. To what purpose now is it said, that an attribute, which we perceive to be contained in the idea of any thing, may be affirmed of that thing with truth? Such an-

attribute

notions much more intelligible, than all that metaphysical jargon, which Dr. Cudworth employs after his Grecian masters. Is it any thing better than

attribute may be affirmed with metaphysical truth of the most fantastical idea. But the difference between metaphysical and real truth is great, and though we have the former on our side in affirming the attribute, yet the whole must be chimerical if the idea be so, and such a process of reasoning may confirm us in fantastical, it cannot lead us to real knowledge.

This happened to the author of these maxims, the first of which is false, and the second precarious and uncertain, when he attempted to demonstrate the existence of God. I do not believe, that he meaned to weaken this great truth, by employing a sophism to prove it; but I believe, that the affectation of novelty led him into a paralogism, or an undesigned sophism. He assumed, that he had in his mind a clear and distinct idea of an infinite all-perfect Being; that this idea has an objective reality, or, in plainer terms, a real object, which may be known by the idea alone, and without any further proofs; and that necessary existence is contained, as indeed it is, in this idea. From all this, he concluded, that an infinite all-perfect Being exists, and is the cause of this idea which represents himself.

Now that such a being exists, and that he can want no perfection conceivable or inconceivable by us, may be, and has been demonstrated invincibly. But to say, that he can become the object of a clear and distinct idea, is to advance a groundless paradox. We may know, very certainly, that there is a figure which has a thousand sides, but no man will say, I think, that his mind represents these thousand sides to him in one clear and distinct idea, nor that he has any other than a general and confused notion of this figure. Much less will any man, who is not a sworn Cartesian, pretend, that he perceives in his mind a clear and distinct idea of the infinite all-perfect Being. He knows, in general, that there is such a Being, and that to suppose there is not, implies contradiction, or rather

many

than jargon, to tell us, that our ideas of white, or black, which we receive from outward objects; our ideas of a square, or a circle, which we acquire

many contradictions. He has particular ideas and notions of some of the divine perfections, well determined as far as they extend, and yet inadequate. There are others which he cannot so determine, and he knows, that there are many of which he can have no conception at all: for I do not agree with the Chinese philosopher, nor with the Jesuit who makes him speak, that there are any which seem incompatible to him, unless it be when he determines all the ideas he has, or when he pretends to have ideas he cannot have; and that we are apt to do so often, the very examples which are brought to show an incompatibility in the divine perfections are sufficient to show.

To believe, that there is a God, we must be taught this great principle of all religion, and receive it on authority. To know, that there is one, we must go through a process of reasoning, that connects certain evident truths intuitively together, and so arrives at demonstration. Though the atheist does not connect them into a demonstration of God's existence, yet he knows them all to be truths, as well as the theist. He knows, that they result from the nature of things. He pronounces them, therefore, immutable and eternal, as he conceives that nature to be; and can take no side in the question, whether they are dependent or independent on God, since he acknowledges no God. The theist makes a better use of these truths; for he connects them into a demonstration of God's existence, and instead of acknowledging the truth of no proposition, like Descartes, till he discovers the truth of this, he finds by experience, that he could not have discovered the truth of this, if he had not antecedently known and acknowledged the truth of many others. He owns several necessary truths not written nor imprinted on his mind, but such as he has framed by observing the agreement and disagreement of his ideas, and such as he concludes every other man

quire by the help of our senses likewise; or our ideas of just and unjust, which we frame on experience, are incorporeal substances, eternal essences,

man who has the same faculties, and the same perceptions in his mind, must necessarily frame. He calls these truths eternal and immutable, relatively to that system of nature from which they result. But he cannot call them independent as properly and as consistently as the atheist may, since he acknowledges the first cause, an Author of this and every other system of nature.

Aristotle, who acts a part as well as the Chinese Mandarin in the scenes of the romance I quote, when he comes to examine those assertions of Descartes, "That the essence of "things, and the truths called necessary, are dependent "on God, and that they are immutable and eternal in no "other sense than this, that God willed they should be so," supposes, that the French philosopher could mean to speak of no essences except those of created beings, nor of any propositions except such as are advanced concerning them. That this was his meaning, no doubt can be made; and he explained it sufficiently, when he said, "God is the author of "the essence, as well as of the existence of his creatures." But even with this meaning the Stagyrite, or rather the Jesuit, is not contented. Descartes should have reflected, he says, that truths which regard the essence of created beings have a necessary connection with those which regard the essence of God. He brings an example. "That the creature "is essentially dependent on God," is, he says, a proposition which belongs to the essence of the creature. "That God is "the absolute master and the free cause of all beings," is a proposition which belongs to the essence of the Creator; and yet, that if one of these could be false, the other might be so too. Now surely the want of reflection was, in this case, on the side of Aristotle himself. "If one of these propositions "could be false, the other might be so too." Agreed, but not for the reason he gives, a supposed necessary and general connection

sences, and independent natures, things ingenerable and unperishable, according to Plato and Aristotle, and which the former, as Tully expresses

nection between truths that regard the essences of created beings, and truths that regard the essence of the divine uncreated being. The reason is, that these propositions are in truth identical, that the first belongs to the essence of God as really as the last, and that to say the creature is dependent on the Creator, or the Creator is absolute master of the creature, is to affirm the same thing. Their essences are infinitely distant, but they are connected by this relation, and all other connection of them is purely imaginary.

We know the relation of the Creator to his creatures, and of the creatures to their Creator. But to talk of a necessary connection between truths, that belong to the essence of one and the essences of the other, seems to be little else than metaphysical nonsense, and the language of men who seek to evade what they cannot explain. When God made the animal world, he made substances whose essences are unknown to us. Even our own is so. What now is the necessary connection between the incomprehensible essence of the supreme, self-existent, all perfect being, and those of created substances which he has not given us the means of knowing, or between truths that belong to either? When God created finite extension he created all the possible modes of it, and among the rest, that of a space included within three lines, which we have observed, and have called a triangle. By contemplating this figure, we discover the various properties of it, and are able to demonstrate several truths concerning them, as the equality, for instance, of these three angles or two right angles. What now is the necessary connection between finite extension in the several essential modes of it, and an infinite but simple unextended spiritual substance, such as we conceive that of God to be in his ineffable manner of being? What is the necessary connection between true and false propositions relative to one, or the other?

presses his sense, " negat gigni, sed semper esse, " et ratione et intelligentiâ contineri ?" Is it any thing better than jargon, to tell us, that " these " sub-

On the whole, we may conclude in favour of Descartes, that he imagined no such absurd connection, and thought himself therefore at liberty to assume what he did assume, concerning the dependency of created essences as well as existences on God, who is, according to him, the efficient cause of the truth of all true propositions about them. Truths relating to God always have been, and always must be the same. They are absolutely, from all eternity, and to all eternity, independent on his will; for he is what he is by the necessity of his nature, and self-existence is part of his essence. But nothing of this kind is applicable to the creatures. They might have been, or not have been, and the supposition of their non-existence implies no contradiction. It is true, indeed, that while they exist, they are what God made them to be, and Omnipotence, that can destroy them, cannot alter their essences. These essences, however, and the truths concerning them, are not so absolutely independent on God, as the adversaries of Descartes pronounce them to be; for even in the hypothesis, that God had no other share, nor exerted any other power in the great work of the creation, than that of calling essences he could not create into existence, by creating the things to which they belong; these essences are still indirectly dependent on him, and he is doubly the cause of those truths which we affirm concerning them, as he called the essences into existence, and as he created beings capable of perceiving them.

This distinction between existences and essences, the former of which, that are dependent on the will of God, drew the latter, that are independent on his will, along with them, into the system of things that are, is not very clear. Might not the obscurity be taken away by taking away this distinction, and by understanding essences to be nothing more than manners of being, determined by the power that gives the being, and

"substances, essences, natures, are the primary "objects of science, and the same too with the "intellect that knows them; that they are uni- "form

and manners of conceiving, determined by the power that forms the conceptions? When God made limited extension, he made it capable of receiving various modifications, and of producing various appearances. These we distinguish by names for our own use. We call them circles, for instance, or squares, or triangles, (I speak not here of substances, for with their real essences it is not pretended that we have any thing to do) and when we have given them these names, philosophers assume, that they are real essences, independent on God, though he is the author of all extension, and gave us faculties to perceive these forms of it.

It would be tedious and needless to speak of the doctrine of the schools concerning essences. I shall content myself to make one observation more on this head. The combinations of ideas which are distinguished by the term of mixed modes, and are principally of the moral kind, have no bad title to be esteemed essences. We compound them, we can therefore decompound them, and the real constitution of every species of them cannot be unknown to us. They are not, however, essences like those which several philosophers have imagined, from Plato down to Cudworth, and others infected by the same metaphysicks. They are not ingenerable, nor immutable, nor unperishable, in a proper sense; for if they were so, these effects would be more perfect than their cause, since the human mind is their cause, and in some sort their creator, and since the human mind is none of these. They are not independent neither on the will of God. They are abstract complex notions. Such Mr. Locke gives us leave to call them, "as by a peculiar right appertaining to the understanding*." The mind makes them arbitrarily and occasionally, by virtue

* Lib. iii, c. v.

"form modifications of the human, and of the "divine mind; and that although the former be "created, yet the knowledge it has is a participa- "tion of that one eternal, immutable, and un- "created wisdom?" In short, is it any thing better than jargon, to talk of "ectypal prints, "and derivative signatures from one archetypal "intellect or seal, like so many multiplied re- "flections of one and the same face made in se- "veral glasses?"

According to such philosophy as this, we may,

of a power to conceive things in this manner, which God has bestowed, and directed to the improvement of general knowledge. There they fluctuate: they are not the same essences in every mind, nor always in the same mind; and if they answer their purpose in any degree, that degree is proportionable to the mental power of conceiving things in this manner which God has given us. Thus even the truths we call necessary, the eternæ veritates of which we boast, are one way or other dependent on the Supreme Being. Their necessity is not antecedent, but consequential to the existence of material and intellectual created natures. Their necessity arises from a conformity to these natures, which we are made able to discern intuitively in certain cases.

But it is time to conclude a note too long perhaps already, though I have hurried through it, and touched the matter of it more lightly than I could have done. I do not pretend to decide the question between Descartes and his adversaries. All I would inculcate is this, that since his opinion may receive a reasonable interpretation, it should not be condemned as absolutely and as dogmatically as it has been; and that it becomes a theist to incline always to the side which ascribes the greatest power to God, from that which has even the appearance of limiting it, by assuming an independency, when a dependency on him implies no contradiction.

and

and we must pierce into the mystery of God's nature, and into the depths of his wisdom, to arrive at a knowledge of his will relatively to man. We must found the principles of morality, not on our knowledge of what our Creator has done, but on our knowledge of what he knows. We must not consult his will as it is signified by the constitution of the system wherein he has placed us, but we must abstract ourselves from this, and deduce our moral obligations from an eternal reason, from the immutable and independent natures of things. We must contemplate the same archetypes according to which our system of being was made, to know how we are to conduct ourselves in it: and thus the same rule becomes common to God and man. Our knowledge is no longer human, it is divine. It is no longer derived from outward impressions, and inward operations; our ideas have no longer their distinct archetypes existing out of the mind, or formed in it; they are all the impressions of an archetypal seal, that is, of the divine intellect. A strange method, surely, of proving our ideas, if not the knowledge we acquire by them, to be independent on God.

I cannot soar so high as Plato and Cudworth. I will not sink so low as Protagoras, and other ancients; as Hobbes, and other moderns. The former amaze, instead of instructing me; and if I understand the latter, I only understand them, to know, that they impose on themselves, and would impose on me, the grossest absurdities.

Strange extremes! When Cudworth holds up the metaphysical glass to my eye, I see something, I know not what; something that glitters at an immeasurable distance from me. When Hobbes holds it up, he changes the position: and I see something monstrous at the very end of the glass.

As whimsical, and as little intelligible as the doctrines of the former are, they may lead men to think, that the will of God, signified by his works, not being the sole true criterion of moral good and evil; and since there is another criterion antecedent to this, nay, even the criterion of it, that is, the eternal reason of immutable independent natures; they ought to have an entire regard to these, and none to the will of God signified by his works: because in them he has done little else than clothe these eternal uncreated essences with a garment of existence, "sartoris in-"star rerum essentias vestire existentiâ." Cudworth declares against this absurd conceit, which Aristotle too chastises. But then, what did the good man, and all those who have held the same opinions, mean? To answer truly, they thought as men deep in imaginary science are apt to do, that they had much meaning when they had really none.

After sounding loudly in the ears, and repeating dogmatically, that things are what they are by their natures, eternal, immutable, and independent on the will of God; they are driven to distinguish, that they may avoid all mistakes, as they pretend,

pretend, and to assert, not what their words import, but something which their words do not import, nor can be said to import any where out of the schools. When they talk of natures by which things are what they are, they do not mean, it seems, as any vulgar man would have thought, the constituent essences of things, the real natures by which alone things can be what they are. They mean something which is not a nature nor essence, but something which schoolmen and philosophers have been pleased to call so. When they say, that things are white by whiteness, triangular by triangularity, or just by justice, and that Omnipotence itself cannot make them white, triangular, nor just, without such certain natures; a man who is no metaphysician, nor logician, must be induced to think their meaning to be, that God makes things, dependent on him, to exist conformably to natures independent on him. If they were not thought to have some such meaning, they could be understood to mean nothing more than this, that things are white, triangular, and just, because God has made them white, triangular, and just; and that Omnipotence itself cannot make black, square, nor unjust, what Omnipotence makes white, triangular, and just. These are most immutable truths, no doubt, and deserve to have their place at the fountain head of science; but these philosophers do not mean by their eternal, independent natures, any natures at all. They mean such intelligible essences, and rationes of things, as are objects of the mind. Now, the

objects of our minds being nothing but our ideas, it follows that these natures, so much talked of, are not natures, but simple or complex ideas of natures, and all the incorporeal substances vanish into air, that is, they are confessedly fantastick, not real. They are merely certain abstract ideas, which philosophers have taken it into their heads to affirm that they frame, and in which affirmation I may have leave to be of opinion, that they deserve no more credit than a man who is in any other delirium. They who are as subtile as Aristotle or Cudworth, who can discover, with the first, that sense is the same with sensible things, and with both, that understanding is the same with the things understood, may find out, likewise, that the nature of a thing, and the idea of that nature are one and the same. But I suppose, that they who preserve their common sense free from the taint of metaphysicks will not easily conceive, that their ideas, however general or abstracted, can be called, with the least propriety, immaterial essences, incorporeal substances, eternal, immutable, and so on.

It is an observation of Mr. Locke, that "we "have very few abstract names for our ideas of "substances, and that the few which the schools "have forged could never get into common use, "nor obtain publick approbation; whereas all "our simple ideas have abstract as well as con-"crete names, and so have our ideas of modes "and relations." From hence that great author infers a confession of all mankind, that they have

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no ideas of the real essences of substances, and a declaration, that their simple ideas, and those of modes and relations, are real essences. Now, the truth of the supposed confession I admit entirely; but the truth of the supposed declaration is not so evident, and requires some explanation as it is expressed. It is, if I mistake not, in part false, and in part true, and serves neither Mr. Locke's purpose, nor Dr. Cudworth's, even where it is true. To argue from the use of words to the reality of things, is no very sure method. Languages are framed by the vulgar, not by philosophers: and when names are improperly given, and words come to be improperly applied, custom establishes them soon, and they easily mislead even the minds of philosophers. The subject before us affords an example of this sort, and if we examine it a little attentively, we shall find a corner of Mr. Locke's system about ideas rent and torn, but the whole fabrick of Dr. Cudworth's demolished to the foundation.

Words have been invented and applied, and names have been assigned, as men wanted them, or fancied, by mistake, that they wanted them, to communicate their ideas with more precision, or even to conceive them more distinctly. Whatever advantage has been procured to the improvement of knowledge by the first manner of proceeding, much confusion and errour have arisen from the second; innumerable instances of which there are. One of the greatest, and of the most pernicious in it's consequences, we find in the ple-

and application of the word abstraction. There is a very practicable operation of the mind, by which we are said to abstract ideas, and by which we do, in effect, generalise them in a certain manner, and to a certain degree, by substituting one as representative of many. There is another supposed but impracticable operation of the mind, by which some philosophers have made themselves and others believe, that they abstract, from a multitude of particular ideas, the idea of one general nature or essence, which is all of them, and none of them: whereas, in truth, though they can define general natures or essences in very clear propositions, they cannot frame an idea of any general nature, which is not a particular idea of that nature.

Since men do not commonly employ abstract names for their ideas of substances, it is a shrewd sign, indeed, that they are not conscious of any ideas of substances made by the second kind of abstraction, as Mr. Locke observes, but content themselves, in this case, with general ideas made by the first. To talk of nominal essences, and the abstraction of such, comes too near the gibberish of the schools about genera and species: and if it does not coincide with the doctrine of certain essential forms, or moulds, wherein different things are cast, as it were, to constitute different natures, it perplexes the understanding, and darkens the plainest objects of it but little less. If we lay aside these refinements, and think for ourselves, we shall soon discover, unless I am

extremely

extremely mistaken, that the former method of abstracting or generalising our ideas is the universal practice of mankind; and that the latter is purely imaginary, not only in the case of substances, and of simple ideas, whereof the real essences are, in my opinion, equally unknown to us, but in the case of modes and relations, whose real essences must of necessity be known to us, since our understanding frames them.

Nothing can be more true than what Mr. Locke himself confesses, that "general and universal belong not to the real existence of things, "but are the inventions and creatures of the understanding, made by it for it's own use, and "concern only signs, whether words or ideas*." On this principle I proceed; but it will not carry me to all the consequences my master, for such I am proud to own him, deduced from it. Let us consider substances, in the first place. We have innumerable ideas of particular substances, and I need not stand to show how little improvement we should make in knowledge, and how impossible it would be to reason, or to communicate any reasonings about them, by the help of such ideas alone. How then does the mind proceed? As these complex ideas are innumerable, so are they beyond measure various. Out of this variety the mind selects such as have a more remote, and such as have a more immediate resemblance, and classes them accordingly. From this operation of the mind has

* Essay, lib. iii, c. 3.

arisen,

arisen the school distinction of genus and species. Now, to speak according to it, which we may do intelligibly on this occasion, as the mind is unable, by abstraction, or any imaginable way, to comprehend any one species, and much more any one genus, under one general idea, it comprehends each under one general name, and we say, for instance, man, or animal. The mind does still more in the former case; for, all the ideas that compose a sort or species having a close resemblance to one another, the mind substitutes one, as I said above, to represent them all. This ideal man is neither Peter nor Paul; it is not the idea of any particular man; it is a particular idea of man made general by the appellation. The archetypes of this phantasm are without, and it is abstracted, if you please to use the word, from them. But it is so far from being an abstract universal idea of man, abstracted from those particular forms, or complex phantasms, which the mind represents to itself (as Cudworth affirms against intuitive knowledge) that it is one of these very phantasms. It is not, in short, an idea of humanity. The mind creates it to supply the want of an idea we cannot have. A general universal idea is inconsistent with the real existence of things: but such a particular idea of that which may exist becomes itself an archetype, according to which we include in the same ideal class, or exclude out of it, the objects that strike our senses. Thus it becomes general, by the use the mind makes of it, though it be particular, and be signified by a particular word.

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The mind proceeds in the same manner with respect to all the other sorts or species, into which it has classed it's ideas of substances. But with respect to kinds, or genera, this cannot be. They may be, and they are comprehended under distinct general names; but none of them can be represented to the mind by any particular phantasm or idea, as in the other case. How should there be one common archetype for things that have not a close, but a very remote resemblance? Such are the various sorts which every kind contains: and therefore when the mind would advert to the idea, as well as to the name of animal, it finds itself disappointed. Far from having any abstract universal idea, it has not so much as a particular idea, that may be generalised, and stand in the place of the other.

There are two other operations, which the mind performs, not constantly, but occasionally. The first may serve to facilitate the communication of knowledge: the second has served to nothing but to facilitate the introduction of errour. From the names that signify particular sorts we deduce sometimes, and as the mind has need of them, adjectives, or concrete terms, that fix and apropriate to each sort whatever belongs to it, or is meaned to be ascribed to it. Thus from man we derive human, and we speak of human figure when we would signify the figure peculiar to him, and of human passions when we would apply those to him which belong to him, though they are, at the same time, common to him, and to other animals. But the school-

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atoms that compose it, have been thought eternal, and if we assume, that they were created in time, we must assume too, that they were created at once. The same atoms, specifick in number, as well as of specifick natures, pass through all the changes, and take all the various forms, which we observe in the material world. There is no new, no continued creation of them. But we know, consciously, that there is a continued creation of these intellectual atoms, that is, of simple ideas, in the intellectual world, in different minds, and even in the same mind, neither specifick in number, nor, perhaps, always exactly so in nature; and thus they are not only combined, as the former are always, with one another, that is, with the same; but new ideas, that arise from new perceptions, enter very often into these combinations. There is another difference to be observed, much more to our purpose. We can analyse more easily, and with greater success, our complex into simple ideas, than we can decompound substances. In one of these operations, we go up to the intellectual atoms. In the other, we stop far short of the corporeal. To what now is this difference owing? Is it owing to our strength, or to our weakness? Is it a difference, as it may appear at first sight, in favour of the human mind? Much otherwise. It serves only to show the deficiency and imperfection of our simple ideas, of the first principles of all our knowledge. If these were not so confined, and so superficial as they are most evidently, if they

they were extended to more objects, and made their impressions on us from a spring, that lay deeper in the nature of things, we should know much more than we do concerning the composition and decomposition of substances. If they were real essences, or the ideas of real essences, we should be acquainted with the real essences of substances, at least to a certain degree: for, what do we mean, when we say, that we have no knowledge of the real essences of substances, except these two things? We mean certainly, that we have not a number of ideas sufficient for the acquisition of such knowledge; and thus the deficiency of simple ideas causes one half of our ignorance about the complex ideas of substances. We mean, likewise, that the simple ideas, which we perceive by the impressions of outward objects, are often false, and always inadequate to the nature of these objects; and thus the imperfection of simple ideas causes another half, at least, of our ignorance about the complex ideas of substances.

Simple ideas are real essences. Of what? Of simple ideas? Of themselves? Just so certain metaphysical ideas are real ideas. They are really in the mind; but they have no other reality. Such essences and such ideas are chimerical alike. All our simple ideas arise from sensation and reflection, from the impressions of outward objects, and from the operations of our minds. What the powers are, that make these impressions on the mind in a passive state, we know as little as we

do, what those are to which the operations of the mind, in an active state, are due. But this we know, the powers that cause are more properly essences, than the simple ideas that are caused by them. An essence is that by which a thing is what it is. We have an idea of white, we know what it is in our minds: but do we know by virtue of what, it is what it is there? Certainly we do not. It is not so much as the idea of any knowable essence: how can it be itself a known essence? Or, what seek we further than to know, that it is a sensation?

Such concrete names were necessary to be invented, not to signify things that exist by themselves, like substances, but to signify qualities, so we usually call them, that cannot exist independently of some substance in which they appear to exist, and are conveyed to the mind in the complex idea of it.

As it is real or apparent want that determines the invention and use of names, so there have been some, and may be more invented, to signify, by one general word, and to appropriate to one substance, all the particular ideas that men conceive to belong to it, or desire to apply to it. This has been observed already, and here we observe further, that these terms are limited by the substance to which they are applied, human by man, golden by gold, and so in some, not in many other instances of sorts or kinds, just as custom has decided. It is not much otherwise in the case of the concrete terms, which signify each

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one simple idea. The complex idea of man was in the mind, before the word human was invented to signify, without the trouble of enumerating them, all the particular ideas comprehended in that complex idea. The substantive gave occasion to the adjective. So the complex ideas of all those substances that communicate to us, among other simple ideas, those of white and black, for instance, were in the mind before the names of these simple ideas were invented. This was enough for use: and our ideas, when these names were invented, as well as the names of the several substances to which they belonged, were enough determined and distinguished. But the schools were not thus contented. They endeavoured to establish the doctrine of general natures abstracted from particular; and since they endeavoured it, without success, in the complex ideas of substances, they resolved to do it in the case of our simple ideas; and thus whiteness and blackness, and all the abstract names of simple ideas, were confirmed in general use.

The same simple ideas being communicated to us from a multitude of different substances; and being observed to be the same in the child and in the man, in the peasant and in the philosopher, they might easily pass for adequate ideas of real natures imparted to all the substances wherein they were perceived. Thus the vulgar think very naturally; and, in fact, not only children, but much the greatest part of men, are firmly persuaded, that the idea of white, which

they perceive in snow or milk, is whiteness in the snow or milk. Nay, this opinion, exploded as it is at present, has been that of the great oracles of philosophy, and many puerilities have been grounded on it, which are scarce yet awhile laughed out of the world. They who saw formerly, or who see now, the impropriety of these words, in a philosophical sense, as they denote real essences, or abstract ideas of such, may have thought, however, not only, that the use of them is of some conveniency in language, but that it is a very harmless concession to the vulgar. They may have thought it too an indulgence of no great moment to the doctors of abstraction, who have refined themselves, on this occasion, as philosophers do sometimes, into vulgar errour.

Whiteness and blackness seem to stand in the same degree of a supposed abstraction with humanity, and colour with animality. This would be admitted by some, while others would contend that it is practicable, with application, and a strong effort of the mind, to abstract general natures of sorts or species from many particular ideas, that we perceive to be the same in substances of different sorts or species, as in the former instance, that of whiteness or blackness, they say they do; but that it is impracticable to abstract such a general nature from many particular ideas, that we perceive not to be the same, though coexisting in the same substance, as in the instance of humanity, they say they cannot. They would contend further, that though it be practicable to abstract

abstract the general natures even of kinds, as well as the less general natures of sorts, where simple ideas are alone concerned; yet it is impracticable to do the same, where the various sorts that compose the kind are so many complex ideas, as in the instance of animality they say they cannot. But, I think, we may affirm all this to be whimsical and false alike, without entering into the dispute between these doctors of abstraction; and on this single principle, whereof we have an intuitive knowledge, That things cannot exist in our minds as it is impossible they should exist in nature. Now singulars do, but universals, about which so much noise has been made in the schools, and so many good heads have been broken formerly in the universities of London and of Paris, do not exist in nature. It is therefore as impossible to abstract the idea of whiteness or blackness from all white or black things, as it is to abstract an idea of humanity from all human existence; or an idea of colour from all things coloured, as it is to abstract an idea of animality from all animal existence. In all these cases, having no real essence to abstract, we have nothing to abstract.

Let us consider, whether we are able to make such abstractions, when real essences are known to us, as they are in modes and relations. For my part I know that I am not. I am utterly unable to elevate my mind from particulars to generals, as we must do, in order to acquire Dr. Cudworth's apodictical knowledge, of which,

therefore, I must be content to remain deprived. I know the real essence of triangularity, and can define it in one short proposition. But to contemplate triangularity, abstracted from every triangular figure, is to my narrow and weak mind as impossible, as to contemplate humanity, abstracted from every human figure, and every human quality. He who can frame the idea of a triangle, which is neither right, obtuse, nor acute angled, nor, in short, of any triangular species, but is all, and none of these, at once; he, I say, if in truth there is any such, he must be of a species different from mine, as surely as he would be so, if his sight could pierce to the centre of the Earth, or discern every frozen inhabitant of Saturn. Triangularity is so far from being no particular triangle, that it is every particular triangle; and no man, as I presume, can think of a space included by three lines that meet at three angles, without thinking of some one or more particular triangles. Triangularity can be no otherwise represented to the mind. The definition gives particular ideas, but is not itself an idea. I know the real essence of justice, and can define it several ways, as, for instance, by saying, after Tully, "Justitiæ primum munus est, ut ne cui "quis noceat, nisi lacessitus injuriâ; deinde ut "communibus pro communibus utatur, privatis "autem ut suis." But what then? Do these definitions, or their contraries, a conformity to one or the other of which constitutes every action just, or unjust, form, in any mind, one abstract

idea of justice? We can contemplate each of these apart, and compare any particular action with it, but we cannot abstract any general nature, with which we may compare every action that falls under some one of these definitions. Justice is a word that denotes particular natures, under a general term, but expresses no general nature.

If there were such general natures as are supposed, they would exist in the mind, and be perceived there. They do not exist in the mind; for they are not perceived by it. They exist then no where, whatever Plato might dream, or might say hypothetically and poetically. The mind creates real essences for it's own use; but that the mind abstracts, even from these creatures of it's own, any general natures, is a mere poetical fiction, which has been adopted, like many other fictions of the same author, for a philosophical truth. All the real essences we know are so far from being uncreated, that they are creatures of the human mind: they are so far from being independent, that they are dependent on the will of man, as far as concerns their existing or not existing; they are so far from being ingenerable, unperishable, and even immutable, that they begin to be and cease to be in the mind, and that while they actually exist there, if they were not maintained by distinct names, and by a constant attention of the mind to them and to their names, they would fluctuate and vary without any precision or steadiness.

When the Stagyrite declared most dogmatically,

that he would have Heraclitus, Cratylus, and Protagoras to know, that, beside sensible things, which they supposed always to flow, and he admitted to be always mutable, there were other beings or entities, neither subject to motion, corruption, nor generation, but immovable essences, the objects of theoretical knowledge, of the first philosophy, and of pure mathematicks; when he spoke in such high terms, I say, the flowing philosophers might have told him, that intellectual beings or entities were very much given to flow, as well as sensible things; and that immovable essences, how well soever fixed by definitions, were not always immovable even in his own mind, since they did not appear to be strictly so in his writings.

After saying so much about these abstract ideas, I must freely confess, that I scarce comprehend what they are intended to be. They are separate from matter, according to Aristotle. They are free from all corporal sympathy, according to Cudworth. Nay, they are, even those of them whose real essences we know, such as triangularity and justice, imperfect ideas, ideas that cannot exist, ideas wherein some parts of several different and inconsistent ideas are put together, according to Mr. Locke. Thus abstraction becomes as great a mystery in philosophy, as any that religion holds out to us: and I am so little able to unfold mysteries, that I may sit forty years together in deep meditation over against a white wall, as a Chinese philosopher is said to have done,

done, and to as little purpose as he, if I pretend to unfold this inexplicable sort of abstraction. Who can help smiling, when he is told, that by the help of such ideas, and of certain selfevident maxims, knowledge is a comprehension of things proleptically, or by way of anticipation, or à priori: and that abstraction is that higher station, from whence the mind comprehends things in this manner, from whence, by it's subtile sharpness it penetrates into the essential profundity of body, of sphericalness, of triangularity, &c.

Strange effects of mysterious abstraction! Strange foundations of eternal and immutable morality! They might be rejected with contempt, if they were absurd only; but they are carried so far, that they become profane, a sort of metaphysical blasphemy, and deserve indignation. Could I suspect the least necessary connection between such opinions and the proofs of God's existence, I should not treat them as familiarly as I have done, and intend to do. But there is nothing which shocks me so much, in the treatise I speak of, as the attempt to prove in a circle, that since universal notions, the supposed immediate objects of science, are eternal and necessarily existent, there is an eternal and necessarily existent mind; and that, since there is such a mind, there must be such ideas and notions as the author assumes. But it may be worth while to set this reasoning down a little more at large.

"Since we cannot conceive, that there was ever "a time when it was not yet actually true, that "the three angles of a triangle are equal to two "right

" right angles, or that equals added to equals " produce equals, and the like in other instances; " these intelligible natures, these necessary ve- " rities, had a being before the material world " and all particular intellects had any." Again: " Since these natures, these verities, are, accord- " ing to Plato, nothing but noëmata, objective " notions or knowledges, that is, in good Eng- " lish, objects of thought, they could not exist " without some mind in which they were com- " prehended. There is, therefore, an eternal " mind, which comprehended them always, or ra- " ther a mind which is itself these natures, these " verities, these abstract ideas." Thus again, and to reason quite round the circle. " Since " there is an eternal mind, that being must always " comprehend himself, the extent of his own " power, the ideas of all possible things. Now " these natures, these verities, are included in " these ideas. Our abstract ideas and universal " notions are, therefore, eternal and self-existent " like God himself. If there were none such, " there would be no God. But there are such, " because there is a God, on whom, however, " they are independent. They cannot be modi- " fications of matter; they must be, therefore, " modifications of an eternal mind. Every thing " that is imperfect must needs depend on some- " thing that is perfect in the same kind. There " is, therefore, a cognation, or connection, be- " tween our created minds, and the increated " mind. Our imperfect intellect must be, there-

" fore,

" fore, a derivative participation of the perfect " intellect."

This rhapsody of jargon is faithfully extracted, and, for the most part, in Cudworth's own words.

A close affinity between the divine and the human mind, and a certain sameness of ideas and notions, is the common boast of metaphysical theology: and father Thomassin, and many other learned and good men of all communions, have talked as profanely on the subject as Cudworth. Their very great learning seduced them into errour: they were too good scholars to be good philosophers, and while their minds were filled with the thoughts of Plato and Aristotle, of St. Austin, and other refining as well as declaiming Christian fathers, there was no room for their own; or their own were grafted on these, and extended and improved from them. " La passion " même que nous avons pour la vérité nous trompe " quelquefois, lorsqu'elle est trop ardente. Mais " le désir de paroître savant est ce qui nous em- " pêche le plus d'acquérir une science vérita- " ble.*" It is father Malebranche who speaks thus: and he was himself a great example of what is here said; for though his sublime genius could not stoop to copy servilely, as others have done, yet he took his hints and his manner from Plato and St. Austin principally, and added one beautiful whimsy to another, till he builded up a system,

* Recherche, &c. B. II, p. ii, c. 7.

that

that carries no conviction to the mind, and only serves to give great admiration of the author.

II.

OTHER divines, beside Cudworth, have assumed, that God knows, according to our manner of knowing, by the help of ideas. Thus Clarke, in his book of Demonstrations, which has had much more reputation than it deserves, assumes, that goodness and justice in God are the same as in our ideas, and that the relations, proportions, and rationes of things are absolutely and necessarily what they appear to be to the understandings of all intelligent beings; among whom he must needs comprehend the Supreme Being, since he makes these relations, proportions, and rationes of things to be the rule or law by which God proceeds, and for his observation of which he appeals to man. Thus he affirms, at least, that God knows by the help of ideas. But Malebranche outshoots him, and confines the Supreme all-perfect Being to this human manner of knowing. He allows him no other. He denies, that he can have any other. The ideas of bodies and of all other objects, "que nous n'apercevons point "par eux mêmes," because they are exterior to the soul, are perceived by us for no other reason but this, they are in God, in him we see them. All the ideas of created beings must be in God, it was absolutely necessary that they should be so; because

because if they had not been so, he could not have created such beings. "Puisqu' autrement "il n' auroit pas pu les produire." He could no more have made Adam, if he had not had the idea of Adam in his mind, than Kneller could have painted your picture, if he had not had the idea of you in his mind.

Heathen divines builded their theology, not only on physical, but on moral philosophy. They made gods, not only of the elements, and the parts of this material system, but of the faculties of the human intellect, as of memory; of the passions of the mind, as of hope, fear, love; of our affections and habits, as of piety, of justice, of virtue, and so on. Now it seems, that if this ancient polytheism and idolatry was to be renewed, the doctrine I have combated would contribute extremely to the introduction of it. These abstract ideas, every one of which is an eternal essence, an intelligible nature, an incorporeal substance, might pass for proper objects of adoration; since they are represented as eternal patterns, according to which all things are made or done, as eternal principles by a participation of which every thing is what it is. Why should they not be adored? They are independent on God: nay, God is so far dependent on them, that his will is determined, and his conduct and operations are directed by them.

Our proneness to measure all other beings by ourselves grows up into strange extravagance, when we presume to measure in some sort even God

God by this rule. God has given us a manner of knowing fitted to our system, and sufficient for all our real business in it. We can conceive no other. But is there then no other? Is the positive nature of God, is the extent of his power, confined to the limits of our conceptions? There is an eye which never winks, a sun which never sets; but, with Dr. Cudworth's leave, the absurdity lies on the side of the philosopher who pretends to see with this eye, and to walk in the brightness or lucidity, to use his word, of this sun: not on the side of a modest and humble theist, who is far from all metaphysical presumption and theological arrogance, and therefore dares not assume so much in his own favour, nor in favour of any created being. Such a man will think, that he makes a much more apposite simile, when he says, that we are shut up in one of those dark caverns of the universe, mentioned in the Phædo: that there we grope about after knowledge, not by the light of the sun, but by that of a small and dim taper. This light, whatever it is, was bestowed on us by God. He gave us our light. He did not give us his own. They who think in this manner cannot be suspected of being too near akin to those ancient theologues Aristotle speaks of, who fetched the original of God and all things out of night. They who think in the other would do well to consider, whether they are not too near akin to those, who have promoted, in all ages, of heathenism and of christianity, su-

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perstition in religion, paradox in philosophy, and enthusiasm in both.

It may be said, you know it has been said by one I love and honour*, "that the immediate "object of knowledge being called an idea, there "is no inconvenience in saying, that God knows "objects, that he knows ideas in the proper sense "of the word, which is Locke's sense; although "our conception of God's knowledge, or any "other of his attributes, be infinitely inadequate, "yet he saw no absurdity in supposing, that hu-"man knowledge hath some similitude to the di-"vine, as a thing finite and imperfect, and weak "and small, can have to that which is infinite and "all-perfect; nor in supposing, with the Scrip-"ture, that we are made in the likeness of God; "nor in supposing, with the Greek poet, that we "are his offspring; and with the Latin, that we "contain divinæ particulam auræ." It seems evident to him, "that intellect is above the powers "of motion and figure, and that it is of kind "altogether incorporeal." I respect the authority which made this objection to what I have said, and shall therefore go as far as I can in submission to it. I see no inconveniency in speaking of the divine ideas, when we speak of the divine knowledge. On the contrary, I see much conveniency in it; because I apprehend, that we can neither conceive any thing, nor explain our conceptions on many occasions, concerning God's

* B. of C.

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knowledge, without ascribing to him hypothetically the sole manner of knowing that is known to us. But I think it, however, both absurd and profane to pronounce dogmatically, that this is God's manner of knowing, that he has no other, and that without the help of ideas he could neither govern the world as he governs it, nor have made it as he made it. To say, in allegorical or poetical style, that we are made in the image of God, that we are his offspring, or that we contain divinæ particulam auræ, may pass for some of those images by which we endeavour, and often improperly enough, to help our own thoughts, and the communication of them; but surely they are not to be employed in the didactick style, and so as to pass, not for distant images of truths, that we cannot contemplate nearly and directly, but for real truths which we do so contemplate. I do not believe, that matter can draw intellect, to use an expression of l'Abbadie, out of it's own bosom; neither do I believe, that the incorporeity of the soul can be proved from the nonexistence of matter, which my right reverend friend takes to be a demonstrable point. Intellect is certainly above the mere powers of motion and figure, according to all the ideas we have of them; and therefore I embrace very readily the opinion of those, who assume, that God, who has, without any colour of doubt, notwithstanding some logical and trifling cavils, the power of doing it, has been pleased to superadd to several systems of matter, in such manner and in such proportions

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as his infinite wisdom has thought fit, the power of thinking. Every other hypothesis seems to me unconceivable, and this, of which so much has been said here, particularly dangerous. It might serve to introduce polytheism, or it is not very far from Spinozism. I could be an anthropomorphite, and believe the human figure to be God's figure, as soon as I could believe the human intellect to be God's intellect, and the modifications of the former to be the modifications of the latter. If I was absurd enough to be persuaded of this, I should be absurd enough easily to believe, with the help of intelligible natures and incorporeal substances, or substances "quasi incorporeal," as many gods as men, and to erect a larger Pantheon than the gods of the heathen or your saints require. If I avoided this extreme, the same hypothesis might draw me into another, and I might persuade myself, that since there is a universal mind, in which all ideas are contained, and of which every particular mind is a participation, every intelligence, down to the lowest, is a modification of the same mind, as every material system is a modification of the same matter; which would bid fair for a composition with Spinoza: and two substances might render a Supreme Being as unnecessary as one substance, to which the modifications of both kinds are ascribed in a manner less conformable to our ideas, and much more repugnant to theology.

I have as good a right to deny, as the most dogmatical writer can possibly have to affirm, that

the Supreme Being knows by the intervention of ideas. Nay, the negative is more probable than the affirmative on many accounts, and particularly on this, that our manner of knowing seems neither immediate, absolute, nor perfect enough to be ascribed to him. To talk positively of the divine nature and attributes, and to determine, on our supposed knowledge of them, any thing more than we are able to collect from his works, and the proceedings of his providence, is very great presumption, though the common practice of divines. But to deny concerning them whatever implies the least defect or imperfection, is highly reasonable, and essential to true theism. Of the excellencies of God's nature we can have no adequate ideas: they are infinite. But this we can know most certainly, that those things, which are short even of the excellencies we are able to comprehend, ought not to be ascribed to him. That the first cause of all things is an intelligent cause, may be proved invincibly à posteriori, and can be proved no other way; after which it will not require much logick to demonstrate à priori, that the all-perfect Being must be omniscient, as well as self-existent. But how he knows, or what knowledge is in him, we are unable to say. We may frame dark and confused notions of knowledge, vastly superior to our own in kind as well as degree, and we should do much better to rest in these, dark and confused as they are, than to frame others, which, being deduced from our own, are seemingly too adequate to be really true.

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The past, the present, and the future, as we conceive them, are known alike to the Supreme Being, not by the perception, the retention, or the anticipation of ideas, but in a manner inconceivable by us; for there is, I think, a plain fallacy in this expression, that the immediate object of knowledge being called an idea, we may say, that God knows an object, that he knows an idea. When we speak of objects of human knowledge, we allude to the sense of seeing, and we apply, very properly, the allusion to the inward perceptions of the mind. But surely no man, who tries to elevate his notions of the all-perfect Being as much as he can above the low level of humanity, for so I will call what we know of the human nature, can think the same allusion applicable to the divinity. Outward and inward sense have a great connexity in the human system. The former gives occasion to the latter, they help one another, and both have their objects. But it will no more follow, that God thinks like man, than that he sees like man. He may have conscious knowledge of all things possible, as we have conscious knowledge of our own existence, a knowledge which prevents even thought, so far from being originally, whatever we make it afterward, an object of thought. But further. When God is said to know objects, he is said to know ideas. The words are taken synonimously on this occasion. But we must distinguish them. A knowledge of things as they are, and a knowledge of the ideas of them, are extremely different, as different as

immediate and reflected light, as absolute and relative knowledge. Every thing we know is known to us in the second manner; nothing in the first. Every thing is known to God in the first: and he has no need of knowing any thing in the second. As it would be absurd to say, that God receives ideas from external objects, so it is no less absurd to say either, that the divine mind combines and abstracts ideas, or that complex and abstract ideas exist in it, or coexist with it, like so many incorporeal independent substances, by the contemplation of which God has, and Plato and his scholars assure us, that men may have, real knowledge.

These hypothetical reflections, on which I lay no more weight than they deserve, will serve at least to show, how little ought to be laid on those dogmas to which they are opposed.

If the Supreme Being does not know by the help of ideas, the chain of Dr. Cudworth's reasoning is broke in the first link of it; for there are then no such eternal abstract ideas, either in or out of the supreme mind, as have been supposed: and all the incorporeal substances, with the verities, clinging like ivy about them, that have been said to exist externally and independently, neither exist, nor ever did exist, out of the imaginations of metaphysicians, those fruitful nurseries of fantastick science.

Should any one ask, like Cudworth, and the sixth objector to the metaphysical meditations of Descartes, at what time it was not yet actually true,

true, that a triangle has three angles equal to two right angles, or when it began to be true, that twice four are eight? It would be a full and sufficient answer to say, that the time when neither these truths, nor the ideas from a comparison of which they result, did exist, was that wherein God had not yet created any intelligence, whose manner of knowing was by the intervention of ideas, and that these ideas began to exist when such intelligent beings were actually created. There never was a time when two and two were unequal to four. But there was, we may conceive, a time when their equality did not exist, because no numeral things existed, nor any mind to compare them except the Supreme Mind; which, being assumed not to know by the help of ideas, can no more be said to compare than to perceive them, or to perform any operations about them. If he who made this answer was pressed by arguments drawn from the consequences of it, he would have at least the advantage of retorting arguments drawn from the consequences of the other hypothesis, and of showing, that he, and those learned divines he opposed, were in a case very common to theists and atheists in their disputes. He had difficulties in his way: they had absurdities in theirs. He would own the difficulty of accounting for knowledge, independently of ideas: but he would demonstrate the absurdity of maintaining, that knowledge in God is dependent on ideas, and these ideas independent on him. He would have the further advantage of stopping his inqui-

ries where the means of knowledge stop; of confessing his ignorance, and of preserving that awful respect for the Supreme Being, which divines are apt, above all other men, to lose, by reasoning about his nature and his attributes, as well as his providence, in a style and manner that no other theist presumes to use, and to which they have no better pretence than that which the tailor gives them, by making gowns for them, and coats for every one else.

Were men, even they who affect to examine like philosophers, and to investigate truth in all the recesses of it, less ignorant of that which is nearest to them, of themselves, and less liable to be blinded by their affections and passions, by the force of habit, and the determining influence of selfinterest, it would not be so easy as it is, to impose such high opinions of the human, and such low opinions of the divine nature. In attempting the first, metaphysicians and divines run the risk of having the conscious knowledge of every man opposed to them; for every man knows, or may know, that the faculties of his mind, and his means of knowledge, are not such as they would persuade him that they are. Every man has reason to suspect, from the natural imperfections, from the accidental infirmities, from the sensible growth, maturity, and decay of that which thinks in him, and from it's apparent dependance on the body, that his soul, whatever it be, has no affinity with the all-perfect Being. To maintain, therefore, an opinion of this affinity, the same persons

persons have recourse to another method, from man, whom we can see, to God, whom we cannot see; from man, of whom we have intuitive, to God, of whom we have demonstrative knowledge alone, and which goes little further than a certainty of his existence, and of his infinite power and wisdom, but not so far as to reach his manner of existing, or his manner of knowing. The knowledge of men is confined to ideas. They cannot raise it higher in imagination, in their own, nor in that of other men. They try therefore to reduce the divine knowledge to their own low level, and, as strange as it is, it is true, that they succeed.

Let them not succeed with you and me. This world, which is the scene of our action, is the scene of our knowledge: we can derive none that is real from any other, whatever intellectual worlds we may imagine. Let us consider then how it is constituted, in what relations we stand, to what ends we are directed. Let us trust to pure intellect a little less than we are advised to do, and to our senses a little more. When we have examined and compared the informations we receive from these, and have reasoned à posteriori from the works to the will of God, from the constitution of the system wherein we are placed by him to our interest and duty in it, we shall have laid the foundations of morality on a rock, instead of laying them on the moving sands, or the hollow ground that metaphysicks point out to us. Thus we shall know, as God designed we

should know, and pursue, as far as our part extends, the plan of Infinite Wisdom. Instead of amusing ourselves vainly with a false sublime, let us reason cautiously, pronounce modestly, practise sincerely, and hope humbly. To do this, is to be wise and good: and to be wise and good, is better far than to be a philosopher, a metaphysician, or even a divine.

The law of their nature is the concern of all men alike. All men are, therefore, able alike to discover this law, and the constitution of things from which it is derived. All men do not discover it indeed alike, though all men, even the most savage and ignorant, have, as I believe, some imperfect notions of it, which observation and experience force into their minds. If there are any creatures of human figure, to whom even thus much cannot be ascribed, which I do not believe, they are ranked as improperly under the human species, as they would be if they had a different figure. Ignorance about the law of nature, like ignorance about many other truths, to which no man can refuse his assent when they are proposed to his understanding, is due to some or more of those many reasons, by which men are diverted from the pursuit of attainable knowledge, or stopped in it: and their errours, in this case, may be imputed, in some degree, to the same causes, as well as to affections, passions, and the force of custom. But philosophers, divines, and lawyers, who divest, or should divest themselves of affections and passions, and pay no regard to

custom, run, by a contrary method, into a variety of contrary opinions, concerning one of the plainest and most important objects of our thoughts. The former stop short of that knowledge, which lies within the bounds of human comprehension. The latter overlook it, while they aim at knowledge that is unattainable; because it lies beyond the bounds of human nature, and therefore of human comprehension.

The notions on which Cudworth endeavours to ground eternal and immutable morality have prevailed much, with some difference in the representation of them, among ancient and modern theists. Let us mention two of the latter only, beside himself, Grotius and Clarke.

One would be tempted to think, that when these men assert the eternity, independency, and immutability of the great principles of the law of our nature, they mean all this comparatively only: comparatively with civil laws, which are novel, dependent on the will of man, and mutable at his pleasure. One might think it strange too, that they should not distinguish between the divine prescience and the divine institution; or imagine a law, made for man, coeternal with God. But their theological purpose in maintaining an opinion liable to so many objections, and quite unnecessary to the establishment of our moral obligations on the firmest foundation, will appear in the course of these reflections. Divines, among whom the great lawyer we have mentioned has a just right to be reckoned, see far before them, and are determined

mined in laying of principles by the consequences they intend to draw.

Puffendorff* is of a contrary opinion to Grotius. He censures, very justly, those who, like him, endeavour to join with God any coeval, extrinsical principle, which they assume that he was obliged to follow in assigning the forms and essences of things. He maintains, that the actions of men are perfectly indifferent, if you set aside the consideration of all law divine and human; that the morality of actions in a social creature is derived from that social nature, which God has been pleased to give him, and not from any immutable necessity; and he shows how ill those passages of Scripture, which Grotius quotes, are applied to prove an original law so truly common to God and man, that God permits himself to be judged according to it.

Clarke has, in our time, distinguished himself in defence of the doctrine we oppose. He has made it the first proposition, in his Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, with a magisterial air, and all the confidence of those men who talk on every occasion of nothing less than demonstration. "Fidenter sanè, ut solent isti, nihil tam "verens, quam ne dubitare aliqua de re vide-"retur†." This proposition, however, on which he presumes to rest so important a cause, as on the angular stone of all religion, will appear to be

* Law of Nature and Nations, l. 1, c. 2.

† Tully de Nat. Deor. Lib. i, speaking of Velleius the Epicurean.

absurd

absurd and inconsistent, when it is once analysed; and his proofs of it will appear to prove nothing, or to prove what is out of dispute. Thus I think: and if I think rightly, there is the more reason to demolish this false foundation, because it is as easy as necessary to lay one that is undeniably true.

The general absurdity and inconsistency of this proposition lies here. The demonstrator confounds in it two contrary propositions; and sliding, insensibly to many readers, from that which no reasonable man can admit, into that which every reasonable man must admit, he means nothing by a pomp of words, or he means to make the proofs of the latter pass for proofs of the former. He asserts, that necessary and eternal relations of different things to one another, and the consequent fitness and unfitness of application of these things, and of their relations, determine the will of God always and necessarily to choose to act only what is agreeable to justice, equity, goodness, and truth, that is, to those abstract ideas, in order to the welfare of the whole universe. These expressions lead me, they cannot but lead me to understand, that the same doctrine is intended, as we have said no reasonable man, no good theist, most certainly, can admit, the doctrine of eternal independent essences, as it has been taught. But the state of the question is changed at once; for, after asserting, that all subordinate rational beings ought to determine their wills and conduct their actions by the same eternal rules, by which God proceeds in governing,

and

and, therefore, proceeded in creating, the world; the instances brought to prove it are all relative to our human state, and the rules are such as could be no rules antecedently to the existence of subordinate rational beings and moral agents. Let us mention two or three of these instances. That God is infinitely superior to man, is as clear, no doubt, as that infinity is larger than a point, or eternity longer than a moment. That men should worship and obey God, for I dare not use theological familiarity and talk of imitating God, is as fit, as it is true, that they depend on him. In short, general benevolence, fidelity in particular compacts, and all the duties of natural religion, arise most evidently from a fitness of application of different things, and their different relations arising from the nature, which God, according to his good pleasure, has bestowed upon us, and from that of the system which he has constituted, and wherein he has placed us. That God is superior to man, and that man ought to worship and obey God, are truths, that have existed ever since there was such a rational creature as man to perceive them, and to stand in such a relation to God. That benevolence, fidelity, and every other moral obligation has existed likewise, ever since there was such a moral agent as man to be obliged by them, and to stand in such relations as we stand to one another. Is it not enough, that we go as high as our nature, to discover the laws of it? To what purpose do we make that intricate,

tricate, by metaphysical abstractions, which God has made so extremely plain?

I might ask, to what purpose this kind of leger-demain is employed in reasoning? After Dr. Cudworth has talked dogmatically of eternal, immutable, independent natures, it comes out, that he does not mean real natures, but the ideas that we frame of natures we assume. Much in the same manner, after Dr. Clarke has talked, at least as dogmatically, of an eternal rule by which God has always acted necessarily, and of justice, equity, goodness, and truth, as of intelligible natures, which have always existed, and agreeably to which God has always directed his conduct, he proceeds to talk of this very rule, not as a rule eternally resulting from the eternal and independent differences of things and of their relations, but as a rule resulting from a system of beings whom God created in time, and from the relation in which he constituted them to himself and to one another. No man will deny, that a sqnare is double to a triangle of equal base and height, from all eternity, if the doctor pleases, and rather than engage in such useless disquisitions: but every man of common sense will deny, that there could be a law of human nature before any such nature was in being. Clarke raises man first to act by the same rule by which God made and governs the universe; and after that, he restrains infinite knowledge and wisdom to act by the same rule by which the creatures of God determine, or ought to determine, their wills, and according

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to the ideas that they derive from the contemplation of their own system of being, that is, of a small and doubtless an inconsiderable part of the universe, not, by immense degrees, of the whole. "Quo teneam Protea nodo?" By the first we are bewildered in metaphysical abstractions, that have no tendency to promote morality; and, by the last, divines obtain a latitude of making what hypotheses they please, and a pretence of reasoning with the same license about the designs and conduct of the living God, as they would take in reasoning about those of a dead, but *not* of a living monarch. This is the true theological secret; and I believe you will think it is so, when we come to consider Clarke's doctrine concerning the moral attributes of the Supreme Being, and the use he makes of it.

But to carry on the analyse of this first proposition. We are told in it, that these eternal and necessary differences of things, for such they are still called, cause it to be the duty of men, or lay an obligation upon them, to act according to this rule, separate from the consideration of the will of God, and from any expectation of reward, or fear of punishment, annexed either by natural consequence or by positive appointment. Now surely this must be thought a very odd method of promoting natural religion, and giving evidences of it, since it puts the atheist and the theist into the same case; and as rules were inconsistently jumbled together before, so characters are now. The atheist may have regard to natural differ-

ences

ences alone, and to the consequences of acting according to them. He may see, that although human actions, considered merely as natural, and abstractedly from all relations, circumstances, and consequences, might be deemed absolutely indifferent, yet no human action can be so considered. The atheist, therefore, may think himself very truly under an obligation of interest, arising from the different consequences of his actions, though he acknowledges no divine legislature; and he would laugh very justly at the man who should tell him, that he was not obliged to pass over the bridge, though he might be drowned in the torrent, because there was no act of parliament for it. The theist indeed must think himself, in this respect, under an obligation of duty as well as interest. Whatever actions are naturally good or evil must appear to him to be so morally. They derive their particular natures from the constitution of our system. They might not have been what they are, if this system had not been what it is; and this system could not have been what it is, if God, who made it, had not willed that it should be so. Nay, even on the supposition of eternal necessary differences and independent natures, it would be still true, that the will of God constitutes the obligation of duty. It would be false to assert, in the terms of this proposition, that the supposed eternal necessary differences of things constitute it alone. How independent soever we suppose the different natures of things to be, it depended most certainly

ly on the will of God, who made the system, to introduce them into it as he thought fit. If he did not make, he assembled, he ordered them; and whatever obligation results from them, in this system, results from them therefore by his will, and is imposed by it. Once more, and to conclude this analyse. It is plainly false to assert, that men are obliged to observe the laws of nature on abstract considerations, and for reasons alone of the same kind as those, which determine them to agree about proportions or disproportions in geometry and arithmetick. The advantages or disadvantages annexed by natural consequence to the observation or breach of the law of nature do certainly determine the atheist, who observes it, without believing a law in the strict sense of the word, but believing an obligation in the strictest: and it is manifest, that no other consideration can, nor, on his principles, ought to determine him. The theist is determined by the same advantages or disadvantages still more strongly; because he looks on them as annexed, not only by natural consequence, but by positive and divine appointment. I speak of the theist as a philosopher only. If we considered him as a christian, we should consider him under the influence of further and greater advantages, annexed by the same divine appointment. Thus the matter stands very clearly: and though men may puzzle it by playing with the words inducement, obligation, will of a superior, law, and others, they cannot alter the state of it.

Right

Right reason consists in a conformity with truth, and truth in a conformity with nature. Nature, or the aggregate of things which are, is the great source from whence all the rivulets of real knowledge must be derived. When we cannot go up thither, we must remain in ignorance, and we may be the more contented to remain so in several cases, because we go up in several to the spring head, or at least as far toward it, as the Author of all nature thought it necessary, that creatures in our rank of being should go. It is a strong instance of the perversity of the human will, but it is true in fact, that men attempt often to go beyond nature, for no better reason than this, because they cannot go up to it; or than this, because they do not find that to be, which imagination had told them might be. These men are metaphysicians, and by this method they have fallen at all times into errour, or into something worse perhaps than errour, but worse surely than ignorance, into doubt, perplexity, needless disquisitions, and endless disputation. Thus it has fared with the greatest scholars, and with men of the nicest discernment and acuteness, with Cudworth, for instance, and with Clarke. In all these cases, the safest side is that of ignorance: if he may be called ignorant, who keeps within the obvious bounds of nature and truth, and presumes to continue the pursuit of knowledge no further. Ignorance belongs more properly to him who is thought to know, while he transgresses

these bounds, and calls every hypothesis a demonstration.

That the philosophers we have mentioned are guilty of this absurdity, has been shown; and it would not be hard to show, by many proofs, that while they pretend to establish morality, they do real injury to theism. They make the incomprehensible Being, in a certain sense, too comprehensible, and the knowledge of the all-perfect Being too nearly allied to the imperfection of the human.

Things are what they are by nature, not by will, says Cudworth. Would it not be more consistent with theism, to say, things are what they are by immutable natures, which the will of God has given them? Would it not be more within the bounds of human conception, and therefore more reasonable, to say, that God constituted these natures in constituting this system; than to assume, that these natures, which are contained in our system, and to the knowledge of which we arrive no other way than by the gradual knowledge that we acquire of our system, are independent on it, and on the God who made it?

The reason of things, deduced from their differences, from their different relations, and from the different consequences of their applications, may be sufficient for the atheist. He may refer the whole to the powers and operations of something, he knows not what, but something self-existent and eternal, which he thinks fit to call

the universe, or universal nature. The theist is not so content. The reason of things is to him that clew, by which he conducts himself in discovering the existence of God, and the will of God, as far as man is an object of it. But the will of God is something less, and the reason of things is something more, in the esteem of such of these men as call themselves divines. An eternal reason of things, arising from their independent natures, and known to man as well as to God, is, according to these philosophers and divines, the true criterion of moral good and evil, the rule by which the Creator and the creature are obliged alike to act; with this difference, arising from the perfections of one and the imperfections of the other, God cannot act otherwise, man may. Is it not to be apprehended, that men tainted with such notions as these will reason constantly à priori, and from them, down to their moral obligations: the consequence of which may be, that these obligations will become as unfixed and as fluctuating in their minds, as general and abstract ideas usually are? Is it not to be apprehended, that they will never condescend to reason à posteriori, and from the actual constitution of things, up to the will of God and the duty of man; the consequence of which would be to establish a rule of judgment concerning the great principles of moral obligations, as invariable as the obligations themselves?

These metaphysical divines are, for this reason, the more to be condemned, that, while they

pretend to knowledge, that neither men nor angels, I presume, are capable of having, knowledge of divine ideas, and of the rule by which Infinite Wisdom governs; and while they would entice us by learned language, vague expressions, and false airs of demonstration, to seek the laws of our nature out of the scene of our nature, and beyond the reach of any clear conceptions we are able to have; this very law is enacted in all the works of God, promulgated in terms the most proportionable to human conception, and writ in characters so plain, that he who runs may read them.

The great principles of moral truth are as much founded in the nature of things, as those of mathematical truth: and it is not a little less absurd to contradict the former by our words or actions, than to deny the latter. If the latter of these have an advantage in this respect, that the demonstrations of them are carried on with greater steadiness and precision, by the immediate and joint assistance of sense and intellect; the former have an advantage, for such it may be reckoned, of another kind. We perceive the truth of both with equal evidence; but as the former are much more important to us than the latter, we may be ignorant of all mathematical, we cannot be so of all moral truth. We discover one, the other discovers itself: it obtrudes itself on the mind, and the mind perceives it with greater satisfaction. He who demonstrates, that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, or that a square

square is double to a triangle of equal base and height, has a dry inward complacency. But he who contemplates the obvious advantages of benevolence and justice to society, and of society to mankind, will feel a pleasure much more sensible: and the same proportion will hold in all the progress the mind makes to discover mathematical and moral truth.

III.

If any man should advance, that we ought to proceed on the known principles of mathematicks, not because there are such in nature, but because mathematicians have made an agreement or compact to proceed upon them as if there were such, I suspect, that he would be esteemed mad. What then was Hobbes, his predecessors, and his successors, who affirmed, that all distinction between moral good and evil, just and unjust, is established solely by civil institution; and that our moral obligations are derived from the laws of society, not from the law of nature? This extravagant system has been over and over refuted by many writers of our own and other countries. Some reflections, such as my first thoughts suggest to me, I too will bestow upon it. They shall not be long, and whether they are new or no, they shall not be copied from any one. It seems then to me, that civil societies could not have been formed, nor the distinction of just and unjust,

nor the honestum and decorum of life have been established, if there had not been, antecedently, such a law of nature as Hobbes denies, and directly opposite to that which he supposes. Your great predecessors, Amphion and Orpheus, would have strung their lyres to little purpose, if there had not been a corresponding unison in the human constitution. The letter of the fable would have proved true, as soon as the moral of it; stones would have leaped into order, and have builded themselves into walls; tigers and wolves would have grown tame, and have formed peaceful societies, as soon as men, if there had not been a law of nature peculiar to man; there was therefore such a law. We may consider man, in a state of nature, as an artless, but we must consider him, in no state, as an irrational creature: and to have been such a creature as Hobbes represents him, he must have been rather irrational than artless. The proof that this philosopher brings to show, that man is made by discipline, that is, the discipline of civil or political government, and not by nature, fit for society, is a strange one indeed. He says, that "Societies are confederacies," which is true in a proper sense: "That the force of the conventions "by which they are framed is unknown to chil-"dren and illiterate people, and the utility of "them to those who never experienced the evils "that arise from the want of society . . . . . that "it is manifest therefore (all men being born "children) that all men are born unfit for so-

"ciety,

" ciety, and that many, perhaps the greatest " number, remain some how or other unfit for it " as long as they live; that all these however, the " adult as well as infants, have the human na- " ture;" and from hence he draws the conclusion I have mentioned. Now for those who never experienced the evils that men are exposed to out of society, it is enough to say, that they feel, and must feel, without the help of this contrast, unless they are idiots, the benefits of society; and for the rest, his argument is no better than this would be: All men are born infants, infants have not the use of speech, some men are born dumb, and have it not during their whole lives; men are therefore by their nature incapable, or unfit to speak. If men were at any time, for years or ages, in that state of war and confusion, which Hobbes assumes to be their natural state, it would not follow, that every one had by nature a right to do, what every one had by particular circumstances and contingency of events the power to do. It would only follow, that instinct determines sooner, and appetite and passion more strongly, than reason. It would only follow, that the spring of human nature exerted it's force before the balance, which is designed to control and regulate the impulses of it, was put into activity, as it must be, according to the same nature, by time and experience. But the case assumed has no pretence to be admitted; neither is it possible to conceive, on any supposition, such a state of mankind as the philosopher of Malmes-

bury had figured to himself. However you suppose the human race to have begun, societies, little indeed, but societies still, must have been coeval with it. If there was a first man and a first woman, they and their children (for these could not nurse and educate themselves) must have constituted a first society. If numbers o men and women sprung out of the earth at once, there might be some contests among the men about these primitive ladies, and some violence might be employed, and some confusion might arise, in the immediate hurry of copulation. But after that, the same instinct, which had caused variance, would have formed societies. Families would have been soon raised, and the authority, subordination, order, and union, necessary to their well being, must have followed naturally, as we may observe that they do among the most savage people. Men never were, because they could never subsist, in a state of absolute individuality. Self-love, directed by instinct to mutual pleasure, made the union of man and woman. Self-love made that of parents and children. Self-love begat sociability; and reason, a principle of human nature, as well as instinct, improved it. Reason improved it, extended it to relations more remote, and united several families into one community, as instinct had united several individuals into one family. Reason performed this by the help o experience: and what is the effect of experience? It is not to make any thing new in nature, it is to discover

discover what was in nature, though unobserved before. We might say as truly, that Columbus discovered a new world, in the absolute as well as relative sense of the word, as to say with Hobbes, that when men distinguished between just and unjust, and made laws and institutions on that distinction, they made that to be just and unjust which was indifferent before. The natural obligation to exercise benevolence, to administer justice, and to keep compacts, is as evident to human reason, as the desire of happiness is agreeable to human instinct. We desire by instinct, we acquire by reason. The natural desire leads us necessarily to the natural obligation: and we proceed, in this case, from intuitive to demonstrative knowledge, by the same sure steps, by which we proceed from the knowledge of our own, to that of God's existence. The law of nature, or of right reason, is the real original of all positive laws. Such it appeared to Tully *. "Er-" go est lex," says he, "justorum injustorum-" que distinctio ad illam antiquissimam et rerum " omnium principem expressa naturam, ad quam " leges hominum diriguntur." As the civil laws derive their authority from a conformity to this original, so it is their real or supposed tendency to the same end, that induces men to submit to them. Tully † shall support my opinion again. It is certain, according to him, that they, who gave laws to mankind, "populis ostendisse se " ea scripturos atque laturos, quibus illi ad-

* De Leg. Lib. ii. † Ibid.

" scriptis

" scriptis susceptisque honestè beatèque vive-
" rent *".

* Though I would not take Tully for my guide in matters of the first philosophy, yet his opinions are often true, and his authority is always of weight, if not to determine, yet to confirm us, on such subjects as these. It does so, very reasonably, in the notions that are advanced and implied in this paragraph. They who assume, that the will of a superior can alone constitute obligation, do really trifle, and mistake too grossly; since not only a moral obligation may exist without a law, but a law may be such as to create no moral obligation. When we speak of moral obligations, either we mean nothing, or we mean, that we are tied, bound, and under an internal, that is, a moral necessity of conforming ourselves to those rules, which are expressed in the constitution of our nature, and on the observation of which the happiness of our kind depends. Reason is, in this case, the obliger. A rational creature is the obliged; and he is so obliged as no law, made by mere will, can of itself oblige. The mere will of a legislator may constrain, may force, may create an outward, a physical necessity, but this necessity implies no obligation; and if king, lords, and commons had enacted, that when parents lived to the age of fourscore, their children should put them to death, you would not have thought yourself under an obligation of putting your old mother to death. In short, human laws are in a first consideration nothing more than the dictates of will, the will of a legislator, enforced by superior power; and, in a second, they may acquire, or not acquire, the right of obliging, as they have the power of forcing. But this order is inverted in the divine law of nature. The moral necessity of acting agreeably to it, in order to secure that happiness, which we are determined irresistibly to desire, is a first consideration, and is alone sufficient to create obligation. In discovering this law we are led to discover the legislator, and will is added to invest obligation with all the forms of law, the will of that Being who constituted the obligation when he made the human system, and who, by constituting the obligation, made and promulgated the law.

Let

Let it not be said, that men have been sometimes seduced, and sometimes forced to receive the will of other men for law; that this has been done without any regard to the law of nature, and might have been done just as effectually on the supposition of no such law. Reason will tell us, that it cannot, and experience that it has not been so done, whatever appearances may have struck those, who do not look far enough back to the causes of things. Men are not attracted by sounds or odours, nor hived like bees; and far from submitting to civil laws made by mere will, they have submitted to these, that they might not be governed by mere will. That fraud and force hold men in subjection, I do not deny, the first principally to ecclesiastical, and both to civil tyranny. But this I deny, that fraud and force were sufficient of themselves, and the true, sole, and original means of submitting men to such tyranny.

I shall not speak here of religious tyranny, the first, and, with respect to the authority it profanes, the most audacious offspring of fraud. Enough has been said on that subject in another Essay. Here I confine myself to civil institutions and civil government alone, and I rest astonished at the strange perversion of reason in those men, who make the abuse of natural law, as far as they can, pass for the original of all law. Could the fraud, or, if you will soften the terms, the art of legislators have imposed originally for laws the dictates of mere will? Certainly not. Mere

will

will would have revolted mankind from them, if it had appeared to be such: and it would have appeared to be such, if there had not been, in the nature of things and in the reason of man, a law which sometimes gave, and always seemed to give a sanction to their laws. What, therefore, could fraud do, or has fraud done, in this respect? Nothing more than this. When reason and experience determined men to walk in those paths which the law of nature points out, and which lead to the happiness of their kind; fraud, like an unfaithful guide, led them insensibly into others. Nature directed them to unite in societies, and to submit to civil laws, for their common utility. Fraud betrayed them into the tyranny of mere will, and when various institutions and various customs had made them lose sight of the law of their nature, it was not hard to persuade them, that the dictates of will, designed for particular not common utility, and even repugnant to this law, were deduced from it. Thus again as to force. When absolute power is once established, it may impose arbitrary will for law. It cannot make things just or unjust, nor create natures, that existed before government itself. But as they were ill observed then, they may be ill defined now, in particular instances. The unjust may pass for what it is in some cases, and be decreed just in others: and thus civil laws not only may, but do very frequently confound the distinction, that nature has made, the very distinction which is so falsely ascribed to their sole

sole authority. But whatever absolute power does when it is established, how could it be established originally, and in a state of nature like that which is supposed? Absolute power must have been acquired by superior force, and superior force by superior numbers. Still the question will return, how were these superior numbers collected in one interest, and under one direction? They could not be so originally by force; for force supposes them, and is derived from them. Hercules might have travelled with his club in his hand from the east to the west: his club might have destroyed here and there a monster, but would have formed a society no where. Nothing but consent can form originally collective bodies of men. Nothing but consent, therefore, to which men are determined by the sociability of their nature, by an antecedent law, could have raised an army, or created that force by which it is assumed, that all laws, those we call civil, and those we call natural, were alike imposed on mankind.

On the whole, as fast as families united in larger societies, and the same plain and simple rules, the first rudiments of natural law, that had been sufficient under paternal government, were so no longer, but required greater extension and a greater variety of application. Philosophers and legislators arose, constituted governments, and made laws, wisely and unwisely, agreeably and disagreeably to the nature of things, according to the general imperfection of human productions: but there would have been no societies to whom

whom laws might be given, no pretence to give them, no disposition to receive them, if there had not been a primæval law, a law by which the families of men were governed in that state, which we commonly call a state of nature, and which laid the principles of future government in another state, to which they were advancing gradually. This primæval law is that code, wherein all the laws, to which God has subjected his human creatures, are contained. Civil laws are the glosses, which sometimes explain and sometimes perplex it, which men make, and men may alter at their will; while the other remains immutable like that of God. Hobbes seems to admit this primæval law, and to give up his own doctrine in that place of his book "de Cive," where he speaks to this effect, for I quote here upon my memory, "that "men were obliged to enter into compacts to "preserve one another, and to seek peace wher-"ever it could be had, in order to prevent the "mischief and desolation, which would attend his "imaginary state of nature." Now if some things were fit to be prevented, some things were unfit to be done, in the supposed state of nature; from whence it follows, that the distinction between just and unjust was made before governments were instituted, or legislators made it, which the same Mr. Hobbes denies.

I conclude my reflections by observing, that the whole hypothesis seems to be raised on three great mistakes. It considers man, in the state of nature, under the direction of his appetites alone,

alone, and going out of that state as soon as he begins to exercise his reason; although Hobbes says, inconsistently enough on some occasions, that right reason is the rule of human actions, even antecedently to civil laws. But to think rightly of man in this very state, we ought to consider him under the actual direction of all his natural faculties, of his reason as well as his appetites, of his reason, artless indeed, and untutored by experience, but, therefore, undebauched likewise, and in all cases sufficient to demonstrate to him the first general and obvious principles, on which the happiness of his kind is builded, and to which he is plainly and strongly directed by the necessities of his nature. In the next place, this hypothesis considers each man as an individual, no more a member of the great commonwealth; it supposes him to have a right to every thing, and to be a rival and enemy on that account to every other man: whereas it is not more evident, that we are born to walk with our legs, and to handle things with our hands, than it is that we are born to assist, and to be assisted by one another. It is not more plain, that each man cannot enjoy every thing, than it is, that each man has not an unlimited right to enjoy every thing, or that the right of each man, where things are common, is limited by his real wants. It did not require more sagacity to discover these truths in a state of nature, than it did to reason and to act as unnaturally as mankind must have done in a perpetual round of jealousy, precaution, and design, according to their

plan

plan of life, such as Hobbes had imagined it. In the next and last place, this hypothesis confounds the ideas of original laws, and of laws made to explain and renew these. It does this unnecessarily too, unless we suppose this philosopher to have been so absolutely an atheist, that he was forced by his system to ascribe the obligation of all law to man, and not to God: for nothing can be better founded, nor more consequential, in the reason of all those who acknowledge such a being, than this opinion; that the Author of all nature, having given to his different creatures different natures, according to the different purposes for which they were designed in the scheme of his providence, and every one of these natures including it's own peculiar law, whether that of instinct or that of reason, the most rational of his human creatures established from time to time rules of conduct and government, conformable to it, and which are, in particular instances, so many republications of it. To use an obvious and familiar example; the same rights of Englishmen, which were settled by the great charter, have been enacted over again by many particular laws. Would Mr. Hobbes have dated these rights, if he had admitted them, from these latter laws? He would not most certainly.

To conclude therefore, nothing of this kind can deserve our attention more, because nothing can contribute more to keep us within the golden mean of truth, than to observe the strange extremes, into which philosophers are carried, by pre-

presumption, by an affectation of singularity, and by other motives, little less inexcusable, though in appearance more plausible. Thus they are carried, in the instance before us, some to set the principles of morality out of our sight and their own too, while they assume them to be derived from eternal natures, independent on the will of God; some, to lay these principles as much too low, as low as the level of human policy, while they assume them to be nominal natures dependent on the will of man; some, to insist that God wills we should follow, in our moral conduct, the same eternal rule which he follows himself, in the government of the universe; and some, to affirm, that far from having any rule at all, every thing is indifferent in it's nature, and man by nature a lawless savage.

IV.

After censuring these extremes, it becomes proper to inquire, a little more particularly, what the truth is which lies between them, how the laws of nature develope themselves to the human understanding, how self-love leads to sociability, and the most confined principle extends itself to be that which connects the whole race of mankind. But before I say any thing further on these subjects, I must give some answer to a query which our good friend the B. of C. makes. The query

is this, "whether there is any absurdity in sup-"posing, that man should imitate the Author of "nature, so far as he is able?" This is said to be "not only agreeable to the christian plan, but "also to that of the Stoicks." See Balbus, in Tully de Nat. Deorum.

In answer to this query I confess, and think myself obliged in conscience to confess, that I hold it to be absurd, and worse than absurd to assert, that man can imitate God, except in a sense so very remote and so improper, that the expression should never be used, and much less such a duty be recommended. Divines have distinguished, in their bold analysis, between God's physical and his moral attributes, for which distinction, though I see several theological, I do not see one religious purpose, that it is necessary to answer. But the distinction once made by their supreme authority, though they admit that we cannot imitate God in the exercise of the former, they insist that we can and ought to imitate him in the exercise of the latter; and to complete this proof, that consists of affirmation rather than argument, they maintain, at least Clarke* does so very peremptorily, that the divine moral attributes, that is, holiness, goodness, justice, righteousness, and truth, are the very same in God as they are in our ideas. Nay, he adds, that God, out of a tender and hearty concern for the happiness of man, (strange words to be applied

* Evid. p. 116.

to

to the Supreme Being!) desires to be imitated by him in those perfections, which are the foundation of his own unchangeable happiness.

When they distinguish thus between the physical and moral attributes, it is plain, that they see how absurd they would appear, if they proposed to creatures, conscious of their corporal and mental weakness, to imitate, even so far as they are able or in any degree, infinite power and wisdom; which would be a ridiculous mimickry, not a real imitation. When they propose this imitation of the moral attributes, they flatter themselves, that the ridicule will be less liable to observation. These attributes are less so, and they can make by the help of their precarious metaphysical and logical reasonings such representations of them, as may seem to render them imitable by man. But they would do well to consider, that if the moral attributes were demonstrated by arguments à priori, and they are not so even by them, to be the same in God as they are in our ideas, yet this general assurance would be far from making them objects of human imitation. To be such, they must be known à posteriori, like his physical attributes; for we can have no knowledge of either, except that which sense and experience give us. They must be discerned in the works of God, and in the conduct of his providence; and it is evident, that they are not, cannot be so discerned in them, as to be proper objects of our imitation. The divine attributes are exercised in such innumerable relations absolutely unknown to us, that

though we are sure the exercise of them, in the immensity of the universe, is always directed by the all-perfect Being to that which is fittest to be done on the whole; yet the notions of created beings who see them in one relation alone, like us, cannot be applied to them with any propriety nor with any certainty sufficient to make them objects of their imitation. This is so true, that in many cases we should act in direct contradiction to the law of our nature, if we made the conduct of divine providence the rule of ours. God makes his sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust. He involves the innocent with the guilty in great calamities: and there is no theme on which divines enlarge more pathetically, than on the unjust distribution of good and evil, when they join with the atheists, though for different purposes, in one common cry. Are these appearances, however constant some, and however frequent others of them may be, to stand as objects, that we are to imitate in our moral conduct? I think no man will say that they are, except those who have so little regard to consistency, that they propose the first to our imitation, while they aggravate the two last to such a degree, that they assume the justice and goodness of God's dispensations, in this system, to be capable of no other vindication than that which supposes another. These writers and preachers therefore must mean, when they exhort us to imitate God, not the God whom we see in his works, and in all that his providence orders or permits,

permits, but the God who appears in their representations of him, and who is often such a God as no pious theist can acknowledge.

When Balbus, since Balbus is cited on this occasion, endeavours to prove the world a wise being and a God, he says, speaking after Chrysippus, " ipse autem homo ortus est ad mundum " contemplandum & imitandum." He is born to do this, so far as he is able; for the world is perfect, and he is only " quædam particula per- " fecti." He has only a participation, our divines would say, of the divine perfections. Further on, the same Balbus, being to prove, that the world is governed by the providence of the gods, assumes, that the gods must be " non solum ani- " mantes, sed etiam rationis compotes," and that they must live together in a sort of civil society, governing the world like one common republick or city. From hence it follows, he says, that there is the same reason, the same truth, and the same law of right and wrong, " utrobique," both in God and man. The wisdom, the reason, the prudence of the gods are greater indeed, though of the same kind; and since these are employed by them in " maximis & optimis rebus," they must be employed of necessity in the government of the world; because nothing can be greater, nor better than the world, " nec majus, nec melius " mundo." These are all the passages I recollect, where Balbus speaks of any thing pertinent to the present question; and I cannot find any thing in them, that is favourable to the doctrine

taught by Platonick and Christian divines, about our obligation to imitate God. I am sorry to find too, that this doctrine is more extravagant than the extravagancies of the Stoicks. To maintain, that the material world is a divine animal, a wise being, and a god, is blasphemous and absurd. But to say, that man is born to contemplate, and imitate the world, may admit of a very good sense, with a little interpretation; since it may be made to signify, what it would be better to express plainly, that man is born to contemplate the world, and to conform his behaviour to the will of God, that is manifested, relatively to man, in the constitution of it. Thus the doctrine of Balbus may receive a reasonable interpretation, which, I am sure, that of Clarke and other christian divines cannot; and, besides, it will afford as much pathetick matter "per la "predica," with the advantage of being true, as the other, which, however piously intended or heard, is false and profane.

The man, who neglects the duties of natural religion and the obligations of morality, acts against his nature, and lives in open defiance to the author of it. God declares for one order of things, he for another. God blends together the duty and interest of his creature; his creature separates them, despises the duty, and proposes to himself another interest. He, who acts in a conformity to the nature of things, carries on the system of God, and cooperates with him: and surely to put the system of divine wisdom in execution,

ecution, and to cooperate with the Creator, is honour enough for the creature. Thus we may attain to the perfection of our nature, and, by pretending to no more, we may do it real honour: whereas, by assuming, that we imitate God, we give the strongest proof of the imperfection of our nature, while we neglect the real, and aspire vainly at a mock honour; as pride, seduced by adulation, is prone to do; and as religious pride, wrought up by selfconceit into enthusiasm, does above all others. They who encourage and flatter this pride, like Clarke, are a sort of Eunomians, and boast, like the founder of that sect, and the fast friend of the Arians, that they know God as well as he knows himself.

Heathen divines were very far from having the the same presumption. The gods they pretended to know were inmates in one great house with men, or fellow citizens of one great city. Such gods they might pretend to know, and to imitate too. But we shall not find that those of them, who acknowledged, beside these inferior generated gods, one supreme ungenerated Being, presumed to claim any such intimate acquaintance with him. On the contrary, they supposed him to be above all human conception, and therefore above all human imitation. He did not stand, in their ideas of him, even in the relation to man of creator or governor, except he might be said to stand mediately, through these inferior divinities, in that relation: and thus we have another instance of the strange extremes, into which philosophers

losophers run. These extremes would be avoided, if they could content themselves to know God, as he has thought fit to be known by them: and why are they not, divines especially, so content? He appears in his works, and by easy deductions from our knowledge of them, to be the first, self-existent, intelligent cause of all things, a Being of Infinite Wisdom and power, and therefore an object, to all rational creatures, not of curiosity, but of awe, of reverence, of adoration, of gratitude, of obedience, and resignation. To what purpose then do divines contend to make him an object of human imitation, by deductions from his nature and attributes, independently of his works, by which alone they can have the little, inadequate, general, but sufficient knowledge of his nature and attributes that has been mentioned? Do they hope to carry theism, and the obligations of natural religion further, by nice metaphysical speculations, hard to understand, and inconclusive when they are understood, than by those obvious proofs, which God has proportioned to the comprehension of every man? I conclude therefore my answer to this query, by asking, in my turn, our excellent friend, whether the doctrine of imitating God, even so far as we are able, does not tend to draw men off unnecessarily, and, if I may say so, wantonly, from real knowledge, into those abstractions that have led so many to confound the divine and the human nature, to imagine an uninterrupted scale of intelligence from man up to God, to flatter themselves

selves with notions, not only of imitating him, but of being united to him, and to invent or adopt, in the licentiousness of imagination, all that metaphysical and mystical blasphemy, which has passed for the most sublime theology.

V.

WHAT has been said in answer to the query about imitating God is not remote from the subject we are upon, though it may seem a digression, since it tends to lay the principles of natural law on their true foundation. All that can be said, to any real and useful purpose, concerning this law, is extremely plain. It lies too in a very narrow compass: and yet what volumes have been written, what disputes have arisen, about it; while men have been, as authors are commonly, much more intent to show their learning or acuteness, than to set their subject in a clear and sufficient light. A superfluous glare not only tires, but offusques the intellectual sight; and of this there are examples to be found. But the writers I speak of here seem oftener to do like the schoolmen, of whom my lord Bacon says very wittily and justly, that instead of setting up a light sufficient to enlighten a large room, they go about with a small taper, and while they illuminate one corner, darken the rest. He says very truly, that they break the solidity of science by the minuteness of their questions; and, we may

may add as truly, that the learned persons I intend here, of both sorts, puzzle and perplex the plainest thing in the world; sometimes by citations little to the purpose, or of little authority; sometimes by a great apparatus of abstract reasoning, and by dint of explanation. Read Selden, read Grotius, read Cumberland, read Pufendorff, to mention no others, if you have leisure and patience for it: and after you have done so, I will appeal to you for the truth of the judgment I make. There are many curious researches, no doubt, and many excellent observations in these writers; but they seem to be great writers on this subject, by much the same right as he might be called a great traveller, who should go from London to Paris by the Cape of Good Hope.

Among all the trifling questions, that have been raised concerning the law of nature, none is more trifling than the cavil made at the very expression. It is futile and pedantick, and would not deserve of itself even the little notice that I have taken of it occasionally. But the ill consequence of admitting it, with respect to the original and universal obligation of the law, makes it deserve refutation. Hobbes used the term, though he denied the thing. His point of view was to derive all law from the authority of the civil magistrate; and therefore, though he acknowledged right reason to be the rule, he would not allow it to be the law of human actions. But the instances he brings in proof are nothing to the

the purpose. The laws of nature, taught by philosophers in their writings, are not therefore written laws, nor are the writings of lawyers such, for want of a supreme authority, "ob defectum "auctoritatis summæ." No doubt they are not. But if they are conformable to the nature of things, they have an authority superior to Hobbes's supreme authority. Though philosophers and lawyers collected them, God made them, and civil laws themselves have no real, no intrinsical authority distinct from this. Nay, an avowed atheist might indulge us in the use of this term, like Hobbes, whether he was one or no, though some divines will not; for the rule of right reason must appear evident to him, if he reflects at all on the nature of things, and not the rule alone, but the happiness or unhappiness of mankind, consequent to the observation or the breach of it: all which together, he must own, would amount to a law, if he could bring himself to acknowledge a lawgiver; and comes very near it, however, in a large but proper sense. How should it not, when we collect this double sanction from the same nature from whence we collect the rule?

Selden, much more orthodox than Hobbes, in his first book "De Jure Nat. et Gent. juxta "Dis. Ebræor." where he treats this matter with that profusion of learning which he pours forth on every occasion, agrees, that the principles of natural law were discovered by the right use of reason. But, after this, he endeavours to show, from the different and contrary placets of philosophers,

sophers, as well as institutions of legislators, that reason cannot frame such a uniform stated rule of right and wrong as this has been represented, nor much less a law without a legislative authority: and he concludes, as every theist must, and as the Jews did, that God, who made the law of nature, published it originally, and publishes it constantly to men. Now, that God made the law is certain; that he gave it, and still gives it "perpetua indicatione," is no less certain; but the manner in which he gave, and continues to give it, according to the Jews, is very far from being so. It is a rhapsody of assumed fact, and of superstitious and enthusiastical notions, common to them, to several heathen philosophers, to christian fathers, to scholastick divines, to Mahometan doctors, and Arabian metaphysicians. To lay the foundation of the law of nature on such vain hypotheses, is to make the most important of human concerns ridiculous, the most distinct and clearest ideas confused and obscure, and, in a word, to hinder us from seeing truth itself in a clear light.

God gave the law of nature, according to the rabinical doctrine, by word of mouth to Adam first, and to Noah afterward: and the great principles of it were contained in the seven articles, that are called "septem præcepta Noachidarum," by whom they mean not Noah and his immediate offspring alone, but the whole race of mankind. How the last of these laws, "de membro animalis viventis non comedendo," came

came to be given to Adam, if it was not lawful to eat any flesh, as they say it was not, in the antediluvian world, is not easily explained. We may therefore suppose, that they did not mean to include this article among the precepts given to Adam, though an inconsistency never stopped the talmudists, and though the rabbins blunder daily through many that are as obvious as this. The distinction they make between themselves and all other people, with respect to the divine communication of this law, is a little more intelligible. As they were descendants of Noah, this law was given to them in common with all men; and since there was no written law before Moses, their patriarchs themselves could have no other moral law than this tradition. But then, as they were a chosen people, selected and separated from the rest of mankind, God gave them, by his servant Moses, a peculiar law: and thus they stood distinguished from the rest of the Noachidæ, whom they called the Nations; as the Greeks had the folly to call every man a barbarian who was not a Greek, and as even the modern Italians, to say nothing of the old Romans, have sometimes given the same appellation even to the most civilised of their neighbours.

Another way, by which, according to the same rabbinical doctrine, the law of nature was and is communicated to man by God, is that of immediate or mediate inspiration, in opposition to mere rational faculties and operations. I call it inspiration, because the Jews imagined an

" intellectus agens," or active spirit, by the influence or illumination of which, and in concurrence with which, the human understanding is made capable of knowing, not only the laws of nature, but all the other principles of science, and deductions of reason, which are the objects of it. This " intellectus agens" is sometimes, and to them, God himself, by a particular prerogative belonging to their nation, "ex prerogativâ gentis." To other men it is the minister of God, that illuminates their minds, like an intellectual sun, by a force and with an authority derived from God. It was in the first way, no doubt, that Abraham discovered, by philosophical meditation, in the midst of idolatry, the existence of the one true God: and, to say the truth, the Jews should be, by virtue of this prerogative, the most enlightened and the most knowing people on Earth; whereas they seem to have been in all ages the very reverse; before their captivity, indocile and ignorant; after it, credulous and bigot, little curious of the real, much addicted to the imaginary sciences, that were cultivated by other nations.

They entertained the notion of this second kind of inspiration later than that of the first, "juxta " disciplinam recentiorem," says Selden: and it is no wonder that they did so. They had been used to think, that the divine presence resided among them, and that they consulted God by their high priest; that he spoke immediately to their prophets, and exercised his power immediately

ately in the conduct of their affairs. But afterward, though he was near them still, he was not so near them; and mediate inspiration to illuminate their minds became necessary. Besides, it was not till after their captivity, that a more refined philosophy, and notions more metaphysical than any they had had before, began to be introduced among them, while they lived under the Seleucidæ and the Ptolemies, in ages when the first philosophy was growing up to that pitch of enthusiasm and madness at which it arrived in the school of Alexandria, and wherever the doctrines of the latter Pythagoricians and Platonicians prevailed. From hence, I suppose, it has happened, that this dogma of the rabbins bears so near a resemblance to the opinions of the Greek, and, in imitation of them, of the Arabian metaphysicians, who confounded together, with more difference of expression than of meaning, if any of them can be said properly to have had a meaning, the divine and human reason. But however all this may have been, the rabbins assert, that the divine illuminating presence, by which alone men are able to discover the law of nature, illuminated chiefly the descendants of Seth and Shem, till the days in which the law was given by Moses, when seven other prophets only arose among the nations; and that from this æra the divine illumination has seldom shined on any persons except themselves. So that on this hypothesis no great improvement has been made in the sciences since the days of Moses, except by the Jews.

I have

I have drawn this sketch from Selden, in order to contrast the extravagancy of these notions, which are derived from a true principle, that the law of nature is the law of God, with those of Hobbes, which are founded on this false principle, that the laws of nature are the laws of civil magistrates: and I conclude upon the whole, that we shall do much better to trust ourselves than such masters, who lead us into errour about the origin of natural law, or about the means of arriving at the knowledge of it. One makes the origin independent on God, and some divines do little less. Another makes the means of arriving at the knowledge independent on man, and above the strength of his natural reason; though the Author of nature has been graciously pleased to proportion them one to the other. If these doctrines are hurtful in different respects, many words and much time are spent about others very little necessary, about abstract notions of moral entities, and about the causes of moral truth, concerning which we may easily fall into errour (while we can fall into none concerning the great principles of it) unless we have the light of that nature to which our search is directed. The philosopher may, because he does this: I had almost said must: but the man of common sense cannot err about these principles, though he may remain in ignorance about some of them, for want of industry or opportunity to discover them all.

VI.

VI.

LET us take things then as we find them, more curious to know what is, than to imagine what may be. Let us turn our eyes on ourselves, and consider how we are made. We shall not find either the immediate or mediate illumination, that is supposed to come to us from without, and independently on which it is supposed that the human mind can exercise no act of intelligence: but we shall find, that there is such a thing as natural reason, implanted in us by the Author of our nature, whose progress and operations are known to us intuitively, and by the help of which we are able to acquire not only moral but every other human science.

Experience and observation require time; and reason, that collects from them, and is improved by them, comes slowly to our assistance. It would come too slowly, and want much of the power it has, weak and imperfect as that is, to regulate the conduct of human life, if the all-wise Creator had not implanted in us another principle, that of self love, which is the original spring of human actions, under the direction of instinct first, and of reason afterward. The first direction is common to all animals, even to those that microscopes alone can make visible to the eye. The second we say is peculiar to man, and so we may say, properly enough, whether we conceive this faculty in man and beast to be wholly differ-

ent in kind, or whether we conceive it to be vastly transcendent in man.

"Homo animans quidem est," Grotius speaks*, "sed eximium animans, multòque longiùs dis-"tans a cæteris omnibus, quam cæterorum ge-"nera inter se distant." I do not take this proposition to be entirely true. It is impossible to observe the rest of the animal kind, and not discern, in many of them, certain actions and rules of conduct, that denote not only a more extensive and surer instinct than we are conscious of, but something that appears rather a lower degree of reason, than a higher degree of instinct; if we are able, by observation alone, and without any communication of their ideas, to distinguish so accurately. In all cases, and in what manner soever it has been ordered by Infinite Wisdom, there would be no difficulty in refuting, by particular facts, the general assertion of Grotius, nor in showing, that the difference in this respect, between some men and some other animals, is naturally less than that between different species of animals, and even between animals of one species, between man and man at least. Superior beings, who look down on our intellectual system, will not find, I persuade myself, so great a distance between a Gascon petit maître and a monkey, or a German philosopher and an elephant, whatever partiality we may have for our own species, as they will find between those men

* De Jure Bel. & Pac. Proleg.

who

who are born to instruct, and those who are born incapable of instruction. Grotius might have allowed other animals much more intelligence than he did; though he allows them, in a note, and on the authority of Philo and others, a little more than in his text. What the authorities of ancient authors signify in a matter so notorious, and so much within the observation of every age, I know not. But I know still less what he means, when he says, "quod in illis quidem procedere credi-" mus ex principio aliquo intelligente extrinseco, " quia circa actus alios istis neutiquam difficiliores par intelligentia in illis non apparet." If he had said from an inward principle, "ex prin-" cipio intrinseco," as he has been made to say in some editions, he would have been intelligible, and would have meaned, very plainly, a directing instinct, or a reasoning faculty, much inferior to that of man, and variously implanted in the animal kind, to direct their actions to their different ends: but this would have been inconsistent with his argument, and he would have contradicted himself. He said therefore, "ex principio ex-" trinseco:" and what could he mean by that? An outward force, that impels or restrains them, and directs their conduct occasionally, but not uniformly? This would be too absurd. Could he mean that immediate or mediate illumination from above, which the rabbins speak of, and suppose, that animals receive from thence the intelligence they want, in certain cases, to fulfil the law of their nature, while they are left destitute of

any intelligence in others? This would be still more absurd. Might it not be deemed profane too, among those, who fear to prostitute the divine action, as men who make hypotheses in theology and philosophy are apt to do?

The surest way of avoiding such absurdities is, to be neither dogmatical, nor even over curious: and there is the less temptation to be either, on this subject, because the principles of the obligation of natural law, as far as we are concerned to know them, are extremely obvious. Instinct precedes reason in man. It supplies the want, or the imperfection of it in other animals. Should we venture to refine a little further on appearances, we might guess, that as the reason of man grows up out of habitual instinct, by experience and observation, so does that faculty, which I fear we must call by the same name in beasts. Some of these have instinct and reason far above others; and man has reason far above them all; because though they have senses more acute than men very often, and several, perhaps, of which we have no ideas; yet the very contrary is true as to mental faculties, which are plainly less imperfect, and more numerous in us than in them. They perceive ideas both simple and complex that come in by the senses, and they retain them too, as we do. That they compare these ideas, in some degree, is certain. How far they compound them, by any intellectual operation, I much doubt. But this seems to be out of doubt, that they want totally the great instrument of human knowledge.

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I do not say abstraction, which I take to be, as it is understood, a mere "ens rationis," and to deny them which, is to deny them nothing; but I mean the wide extended power of generalising the ideas they have, without which there can be no ratiocination, nor knowledge sufficient to constitute moral agents.

As divines have impudently and wickedly assumed, (give me leave to use on this occasion, which deserves it if any can, the style they employ on every dispute) that there is a law of right reason common to God and man; so lawyers have advanced, most absurdly, that the law of nature is common to man and beast. "Jus naturale est," say the compilers of the digest, "quod natura omnia animalia docuit. Nam jus "istud non humani generis proprium, sed omnium animalium, etc."

That the history and law of Moses is favourable to this opinion likewise, and that beasts, as well as men, are represented and treated therein as accountable creatures, must not be denied, whatever shifts and evasions commentators have invented. God is made to say, in the ninth chapter of Genesis, speaking to Noah and his children, "sanguinem animarum vestrarum requiram de manu cunctarum bestiarum, et de "manu hominis, etc." The text is plain. Shall it be evaded by saying, on some rabbinical authority, that the antediluvian tyrants kept wild beasts to destroy men? and if they did so, who was to suffer, the tyrant or the beasts? not the beast

certainly, unless they had both the same law; and yet the beast was accountable by it, as well as the tyrant. Thus again, in the xiiith of Deuteronomy, God is made to say in the supposed case of idolatry....." percuties habitatores urbis " illius in ore gladii, et delebis eam ac omnia quæ " in illa sunt, usque ad pecora." Will it be sufficient to say, that this order was given to show the heinousness of a crime, by the punishment of creatures who neither were nor could be guilty of it? Among the judgments denounced in Leviticus, against those who should copulate with beasts, the punishment is to be inflicted on the beast as well as on the man or woman. " Qui " cum jumento & pecore coierit morte moriatur: " pecus quoque occidite. Mulier quæ succubue- " rit cuilibet jumento simul interficietur cum eo; " sanguis eorum sit super eos." The Jews are said to have dispensed with this punishment, when the boy was under nine, and the girl under three years of age; because they did not suppose children so young to be capable of such pollution. But was the beast that copulated with a man or a woman, at any age, capable of knowing the crime? Mr. Selden brings a passage or two out of the Misna to show, that the beast was not put to death for sinning against any law, but in order to blot out the memory of so great a scandal. He adds, that the death of the beast was deemed a punishment on the owner, who should have kept him with greater care; and from hence he concludes, " adeò ut pœnam ob jus aliquod viola-

" tum

"tum ad bestiam attinere neutiquam ullatenus "admittant, nec jure aliquo eam teneri." But it will not be hard to prove, from what Mr. Selden himself admits in this very chapter *, that the Jews made beasts accountable, like moral agents, whatever their rabbins might pretend, to mitigate the absurdity. The Sadducees brought some such accusation against them. Maimonides answers it by denying, that the beast who had killed a man was put to death, "ad pœnam ab illa exigendam." He was put to death, "ad pœnam exigendam a "domino;" for it was not lawful to eat the goring ox, after he had been stoned. But if this was so, how came the ox to escape when he had killed a Gentile, and to be stoned irremissibly when he had killed a Jew? How came the same rule to be observed in the case of bestiality? In short, is it not plain, and would it not be allowed to be so, in the case of any other nation, that the Jews imagined the law of nature to be common to man and beast; that they understood and executed their own law accordingly, and that notwithstanding the distinction made between the law of the Gentiles and the law of the Jews, with respect to the punishment, they must have proceeded, in the cases here mentioned, without any principle at all, or on this principle, that beasts are by nature accountable for crimes, and even able to discern between the greater crime and the less? I know nothing more absurd than this, except a

* Lib. i, c. 4.

custom or law at Athens, that was, however, less cruel. The weapons by which a murder had been committed were brought into court, as if they too were liable to punishment; and the statue, that had killed a man by it's fall, was, by a solemn sentence of that wise people the Thasii, founded on a law of Draco, cast into the sea.

The principle of this jurisprudence cannot be reconciled to right reason. But the definition of the Roman lawyers may be shown to be rather too short than false. As far as an instinct, common to all animals, directs the conduct of men, this instinct may be called the law of nature, and this law may be called the law of the whole kind. But in the human species, where instinct ceases, reason is given to direct; a second table is added to the first, and both together compose the law of nature relatively to man. Instinct and reason may be conceived as different promulgations of the same law; one made of a part only by nature herself, immediately and universally; the other marked out by her in the whole extent of the law, and to be collected from these marks or notices by reason, which is right or wrong as it promulgates agreeably to them or not.

There is a sort of genealogy of law, in which nature begets natural law, natural law sociability, sociability union of societies by consent, and this union by consent the obligation of civil laws. When I make sociability the daughter of natural law, and the granddaughter of nature, I mean plainly this. Self-love, the original spring of human

man actions, directs us necessarily to sociability. The same determination of nature appears in other animals. They all herd with those of their own species, with whom they sympathise more; whose language, perhaps, whether it consists in signs or sounds, they understand better, and from whom, if individuals do not receive much good, they may have less evil to apprehend. This instinct operates, at least, as strongly in man. I shall not contradict what Tully says, in his Offices, that if we were not sociable "propter ne-"cessitatem vitæ," on account of our mutual wants, if they were all supplied by Providence, and without any human help, "quasi virgulâ "divinâ," yet still we should fly absolute solitude, and seek human conversation*. I believe we should. But even in this imaginary case, self-love would be the determining principle still. That friendships may be formed, and maintained, without any consideration of utility, I agree, and hope I have proved. There is a sort of intellectual sympathy, better felt than expressed, in characters, by which particular men are sometimes united sooner, and more intimately than they could be by mere esteem, by expectation of good offices, or even by gratitude. I know not, to say it by the way, whether there is not a sort of corporeal sympathy too, without the supposition of which it is impossible to account for the strong attachments, which some men have had for the

* Cic. Lib. 1, c.

least

least tempting, and in all respects the least deserving women, and some women for the least tempting and least deserving men.

But this is not the case of general sociability. To account for that, we have no need to recur to occult qualities. Instinct leads us to it, by a sense of pleasure: and reason, that recalling the past foresees the future, confirms us in it, by a sense of happiness. Instinct is an inferior principle, and sufficient for the inferior ends to which other animals are directed. Reason is a superior principle, and sufficient for the superior ends to which mankind is directed. The necessities, the conveniences of life, and every agreeable sensation, are the objects of both. But happiness is a continued enjoyment of these, and that is an object proportioned to reason alone. Neither is obtained out of society; and sociability therefore is the foundation of human happiness. Society cannot be maintained without benevolence, justice, and the other moral virtues. These virtues, therefore, are the foundations of society: and thus men are led, by a chain of necessary consequences, from the instinctive to the rational law of nature, if I may speak so. Self-love operates in all these stages. We love ourselves, we love our families, we love the particular societies to which we belong, and our benevolence extends at last to the whole race of mankind. Like so many different vortices, the centre of them all is self-love, and that which is the most distant from it is the weakest.

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This will appear to be in fact the true constitution of human nature. It is the intelligible plan of divine wisdom. Man is able to understand it, and may be induced to follow it by the double motive of interest and duty. As to the first, real utility and right reason coincide. As to the last, since the Author of our nature has determined us irresistibly to desire our own happiness, and since he has constituted us so, that private good depends on the publick, and the happiness of every individual on the happiness of society, the practice of all the social virtues is the law of our nature, and made such by the will of God, who, having determined the end and proportioned the mean, has willed that we should pursue one by the other. To think thus, is to think reasonably of man, and of the laws of his nature, as well as humbly and reverently of the Supreme Being. But to talk, like Cumberland, of promoting the good of the whole system of rational agents, among whom God is included, and of human benevolence toward him, is to talk metaphysical jargon and theological blasphemy. He confesses, that he uses these expressions in an improper sense, and explains, most unintelligibly to any man who has right conceptions of the majesty of the all-perfect Being, what he means. His meaning, which he takes from Tully, and which Tully took from the Stoicians, is expressed by the Roman philosopher in the first book of his laws. He says there, that "nothing is more divine than "reason; that reason grown up to maturity and "per-

" perfection is called wisdom; that nothing being " better than this reason, which is in man as well " as in God, the first society that man has is in " this community of reason with God; that *from* " this community of reason there arises a com- " munity of law, so that the whole world is to be " be deemed one city or state, composed of gods " and men*." Much might be said to show the absurdity and impertinence of such doctrines as these, and some reflections to this purpose have been made occasionally. But I content myself to observe here, how unnecessary these doctrines are to explain what the laws of nature are, and what the authority is by which they are made laws, even in the strictest sense of the word. We say, that the law of nature is the law of reason: and so it is in this sense, and thus far. A right use of this faculty, which God has given us, collects this law from the nature of things, as they stand in the system which he has constituted. Reason can look no higher, nor will right reason attempt it; for surely no disquisition can be more vain and needless, than that which examines, whether actions are lawful and unlawful, "debiti aut illiciti," because they are commanded or forbid by God; or whether they are such " per se," independently on God, and therefore necessarily, " ne- " cessariò," commanded or forbidden by him.

* Quum adolevit atque perfecta est. : . . . eaque et in homine et in Deo. Una civitas communis deorum atque hominum existimandus. Cic. de Legib.

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Grotius adopts the last of these notions*: and the general current of metaphysical refinement runs that way. It assumes in man a community of reason with God, and then it seems consequential to assume, that men, such men at least as these reasoners imagine themselves to be, are able to discern natures, and to judge of things antecedently to actual existence, and abstractedly from it; whereas, perhaps, to think rightly, we must think, that these natures and things, considered abstractedly from the manner and the relations in which they exist, are nothing better than imaginary entities, objects of ill chosen speculation, not of knowledge. He who thinks thus will be apt to ask, what would become of justice, if we supposed a system wherein there was no property; or what of temperance, if we supposed one wherein there could be no excess? such questions, and many other objections, would not be easily answered: and the sole effect of this hypothesis must be, as I think it has been, to render our notions of natural laws disputable and indeterminable in many cases. This disquisition is therefore not only vain, but hurtful. It is needless too, absolutely needless: for will any man deny, however indifferent actions may be, "per "se," and simply considered, they cease to be so when they are connected with a system, and cannot be separated, not even in imagination, from the relations they bear to other parts of the

* Grot. De Jure Bel. & Pac. Lib. 1, c. 1.

system,

system, nor from their effects on the whole? The system to which we belong, like every other system, was made by the will of God, and therefore all the natures contained in it, both physical and moral, were ordained by the same will. It has been said, with shocking impiety, by schoolmen and others, that if things were made as they are by the mere will of God, and not according to the essential differences and eternal independent natures of things, God might have made our obligations by the law of nature to be contrary to what they are. He might have made it our duty to blaspheme not to adore him, and to exercise injustice not justice in our dealings with other men. But this is one instance, and not the least, of that habitual presumption, which men contract in the schools of metaphysicks and theology, where they are accustomed to reason about what Infinite Wisdom and power might, or should have done, instead of contenting themselves to know what they have done, and pronouncing it, for that reason, fittest to be done. In creating man, God designed to create not only a rational, but a social creature, and a moral agent: and he has framed his nature accordingly. If he had designed this world to be the habitation of devils, he might have made us by nature, what we say they have made themselves by rebellion. But as we ought not to presume to measure the divine perfections, nor the proceedings of Infinite Wisdom, by our scanty and precarious ideas, so it is worse than presumption to ascribe, even hypothetically, to the all-

perfect Being any thing that is evidently repugnant to our ideas of perfection. Once more, therefore, let us be content to know things as God has been pleased to show them to us, and to look no further than our nature for the law of it. In that we shall find this law coeval with our system, if not with the author, and as immutable as God.

They who affect to carry their search further fall into different absurdities. Some are intent on such abstractions, as have been mentioned, abstractions of eternal essences, intelligible independent natures, by which both natural and moral differences were constituted, before there was any natural or moral law, any natural or moral agents. While these men pretend to consult the dictates of right reason, they leave reason no rule to go by. Every man assumes, that his own is right: and ethicks become as intricate, as uncertain, and as contentious a science as theology. While these men misapply and abuse their reason, there are those who seem to have no want of it, in order to discover the law of nature. They affirm, that they have (and the sole proof, in this case, as in the case of abstraction, is affirmation) a moral sense, that is, an instinct by which they distinguish what is morally good from what is morally evil, and perceive an agreeable or disagreeable intellectual sensation accordingly, without the trouble of observation and reflection. They bid fair to be enthusiasts in ethicks, and to make natural religion as ridiculous as some of their brothers

brothers have made revealed religion, by insisting on the doctrine of an inward light.

The last of these wild men, that I shall mention, are such as Anaxarchus, and our Hobbes. If the former had been guilty of nothing worse than that which Grotius lays to his charge, he would have been less liable to censure than Grotius himself. This great lawyer and divine distinguishes between the law of nature, and the positive law of God, or man. By the last, he understands a law of will *. By the first, a dictate of right reason †, that shows the moral turpitude, or the moral necessity ‡ there is in every action, that is, a supposed morality or immorality, independent on any positive law. Thus he distinguishes, and therefore blames Anaxarchus for speaking too indistinctly § of law. But this distinction must not pass for true. The law of nature, which he allows divine, in one sense, is in every sense as much as any other a positive law of God, enacted as truly by the divine will, and promulgated by the divine authority, not only as truly, but more evidently and more universally, as well as immutably. The fault of Anaxarchus lay here, that, to flatter Alexander, when he had killed Clitus ‖, he attributed to this prince the power, that the poets attributed to Jupiter, the power to make particular and even occasional rules of right and wrong by will. The fault of Hobbes lay here,

* Jus voluntarium. † Dictatum rectæ rationis.
‡ Moralem turpitudinem, aut necessitatem moralem.
§ Nimium indistincté. ‖ Plut. in Alexan.

he

he put the Supreme Being out of the case entirely, ascribed no legislative authority, or no exercise of it, to him, assumed all actions to have been indifferent, not only before our system was created, but even after it was so, and till the civil magistrate had made a difference between them, by commanding some and by forbidding others.

Many such general and fundamental absurdities as these are to be found in the writings even of those, who have writ with the most applause on this subject; beside a multitude of particular questions, as frivolous as any that the schoolmen ever broached. I pass them all by with the neglect that they deserve, except one; some further notice of which is necessary to connect with what has been said, and to carry on my train of thoughts.

VII.

THE presumption of those, who pretend to deduce our moral obligations from the moral attributes of God, has so much theological authority on it's side, that the absurdity of it cannot be too often exposed and censured. There is fraud too, which I did not observe before, in this pretension; and fraud so manifest, that we may sometimes suspect it to be wilful. Instead of transfetring from God to man, to use a phrase of Cicero, they transfer from man to God; and while they boast, that man is made after the image of God, they make God after the image of man.

What they present to us for a copy, is the original; and what they present for the original, is in reality the copy. Though we rise from the knowledge of ourselves, and of the other works of God, to a knowledge of his existence, and his wisdom, and power, which we call infinite, because the sensible effects of them go far beyond our utmost conceptions of wisdom and power, yet we cannot rise thus to a knowledge of his manner of being, nor of his manner of producing those effects, which give us ideas of wisdom and power; and as little, or less if possible, can we rise from our moral obligations to his supposed moral attributes. I call them supposed, because, after all that has been said to prove a necessary connection between his physical and his moral attributes, the latter may be all observed in his wisdom. It is even more agreeable to the phænomena, to believe, that they are so, and that his wisdom determining him to do always that which is fittest to be done upon the whole, of which fitness we are, in no degree, competent judges, the effects of it give us sometimes ideas of those moral qualities, which we acquire by reflection on ourselves or by our dealings with one another, and sometimes not. The works of God would give us ideas of wisdom and power, if human actions and operations gave us none; and, in fact, the examples of savage nations will show, I think, that the first and strongest impressions of this kind come from thence. But it is evident, that the first and strongest impressions that we receive

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of benevolence, justice, and other moral virtues, come from reflection on ourselves, and from our dealings with one another, from what we feel in ourselves, and from what we observe in other men. These we acknowledge to be, however, limited and imperfect, the excellencies of our own nature, and therefore conceiving them without any limitations or imperfections, we ascribe them to the divine. We do worse: we ascribe our affections and passions to the divine nature. We make God so much a copy of man, that we design the worst, as well as the best of our own features, if I may say so, in our representations of him: and as common as it is, no unprejudiced thinking man can hear, without astonishment, our perfections and our imperfections imputed to the Supreme Being, in the same breath, and by the same men; with this difference, at most, that the former are imputed directly, and the latter sometimes under the thin and trite veil of analogy. In a being thus constituted, they may well imagine, that the moral virtues are the same as they are in our ideas: and theology may easily deduce from his attributes the characters theology has given them. But a being thus constituted is not the supreme, the All-perfect Being: and a very short analyse of the excellencies of our own nature will be sufficient to show, that they cannot be applied from man to God without profaneness, nor from God to man without the most shameful absurdity. Let me allude, on this occasion, to a passage I have seen quoted from the

Ethicks of Aristotle. To what actions of the divinity can we apply, or from what can we deduce our notions of human justice? Both might be done, perhaps, by those who assumed, like Tully, a community of gods and men; or by those who drew the divinity down to human conversations and human cares, to be immediately, and, as we may say, personally, an actor in human affairs, to be a contracting party in covenants and alliances with men. Nay, something of the same kind may be done by those who acknowledge the Infinite Wisdom of God, and yet include him in this system of rational agents, every one of which is obliged to promote the good of the whole; who acknowlegde the infinite distance between God and man, and yet assert, that they may be compared together on accout of their rationality, and be said, not figuratively but literally, to be of the same mind. But how shall we deduce fortitude from the attributes of God, or ascribe this virtue to him who can endure no pain, nor be exposed to any danger? How temperance, when it would be the most horrid blasphemy to suppose him subject to any human appetites and passions, and much more to some so inordinate as to require a particular virtue to restrain and govern them? I might bring many more instances of the same kind. But these are enough: and he, who will not be convinced by these, how absurdly the laws of nature are founded, by some writers, in the moral attributes of God, will be convinced by none.

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But now, as absurd as these doctrines are, we must not imagine, that the law of nature wants any proofs of a divine sanction, or a divine original. They are both contained in one: and the punishment, which attends the breach of this law, results, as necessarily as the law itself, from that nature, which God has been pleased to constitute according to his good pleasure. Let it not be said, that this punishment is only temporal, and the sanction therefore insufficient. Let not this be said, particularly by those men, who talk so much of a positive law given by God to his chosen people, the sanction of which was no other than temporal pains and penalties. Let it not be objected further, that the penalties, which make the sanction of natural law, affect nations collectively, and not men individually; for which reason, they are less proper to enforce the observation of the law. The penalties annexed to the breach of the law of Moses were of the same kind, in general, oppression, famine, pestilence, wars, and captivities: and when particular punishments were inflicted by virtue of this law, it did no more, than what is done every day and in all countries, with less tumult and with better order, in consequence of the law of nature, and for the preservation of society. Once more, let it not be objected, as it has been, that this law is not universally known. It is universally given, and if it is not known and practised alike by all mankind, many of the first great principles of it are so in every human society, even in those of the

least civilised people; while the far greatest part of the world are invincibly ignorant of the first principles of christianity, without the knowledge of which, and without faith in which, they are all condemned to eternal punishment.

Instead of making objections so insufficient as these, and so liable to be retorted, let the same men confess, that the divine institution of the law of nature rests on fuller and more convincing proofs, both external and internal, than any that have been found, or could be given, of the divine institution of christianity. The latter has all those which the manner in which it was revealed, and the nature of it, allowed it to have. But the manner in which the former has been revealed to mankind, as well as the matter of it, admitted of proofs of both kinds, much more evident, and much more proportioned to the human understanding. The good news of christianity was published by Christ and his Apostles; it was confirmed by miracles, and the proof was no doubt sufficient for the conversion of all those who heard the publication of this doctrine, and saw the confirmation of it. One can only wonder, that any such remained unconvinced. But this proof became, in a very little time, traditional and historical: and one might be allowed to wonder, how the effect of it continued, and increased too, as the force of it diminished, if the reasons of this phænomenon were not obvious in history. Nay, though they are so, one may still wonder why they, who propagate christianity, have not

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met oftener with the answer which Ethelred, the Saxon king, made to Augustine, " I cannot aban- " don the religion of my fathers, for one that " you would persuade me to receive on the au- " thority of persons quite unknown to me." He came however afterward to a better sense, either by the supernatural effects of grace, or by the natural effects of the cajolement or importunity, perhaps, of Berthe. The revelation of the law of nature is of another kind. Whether the word of God is his word, may be, and we see has been, disputed by theists. But whether his works are his works, neither has been, nor can be disputed by any such. Natural religion therefore being founded on human nature, the work of God, and on the necessary conditions of human happiness, which are imposed by the whole system of it, every man who receives the law of nature receives it on his own authority, and not on the authority of other men, known or unknown, and in their natural state as fallible as himself. The revelation is not communicated to him only by tradition and history: it is a perpetual, a standing revelation, always made, always making, and as present in these days as in the days of Adam, to all his offspring. The external proofs then, for these are properly such, of the divine institution of the law of nature, are conclusive to every theist. Let us examine the internal, and compare them with the proofs that are contained in or deduced from the Scriptures, to show their divine original.

VIII.

Now the unwritten law of God, unwritten even in the hearts of men, how early soever instinct disposes them to receive it, is an object of knowledge, not of belief. We know, that he has given us a law of our nature, with as great a certainty as inward consciousness and outward observation can give us: and by these means, by which we acquire all other science, it is in the power of every rational creature to acquire as much of this science, as the ends of his being make it necessary that he should. Natural law is founded in reason, which every creature, that has it, may exercise, and the creature, that has it not, is not subject to the law. Christianity is founded in faith; and faith proceeds from grace. He who has not faith, cannot fulfil a law, that consists at least as much in believing as in practising: and whether he shall have grace or no, does not depend on him. Thus the difference between the internal proofs of the two laws stands in one respect. The contents of the law of nature are objects of such a certainty as the Author of nature alone can communicate. The contents of the whole christian system, laid down in our Scriptures, are objects of such a probability, as may force assent very reasonably, in this case, without doubt; although a concurrence of various circumstances, improved by the credulity of some men and the artifice

artifice of others, has forced this assent in cases not very dissimilar, and wherein it would have been more reasonably withheld. The difference here stated, between the manifestations of the will of God to man in the law of nature and in every other law, is so true, that every other law is controlled by it, and could not pass for the law of God, if it was seen to be repugnant to the former. To say nothing of the law given to Adam, nor of that given to Noah, according to the Jews, all orthodox writers think themselves obliged to hold, for the honour of the Mosaical law, not only that there is nothing contrary to the natural law enjoined by it, "id quod eâ lege præcipitur non "esse contra jus naturæ," as Grotius says*, but also, that all the obligations of the natural law are contained in it, "contineri quidem in sacro "illo corpore, seu Pentateucho," as Mr. Selden says; though he owns at the same time, that much chemical skill is necessary to extract them from it. That the christian law is nothing else than the law of nature, enforced by a new revelation, every friend to christianity admits, and the worst of it's enemies dare not deny, though he denies the reality of the revelation.

Another internal proof of the divine original of the law of nature is the plainness and simplicity, which renders it intelligible in all times and all places alike, and proportions it to the meanest

* Lib. 1, c. 1, de Jure Bel. & Pac.

understanding.

understanding. It has been made intricate by casuistry, that of lawyers and that of divines, as christian religion has been by theology. But there is a considerable difference between the two cases. The first principles of natural religion are so simple and plain, that casuistry has no apparent pretence to meddle with them, no more than it would have if it pretended to teach us to see things that lie obvious before us, at a just distance, and exactly proportioned to our sight. These principles want neither paraphrase nor commentary, to be sufficiently understood; whereas the very first principles of christian religion, concerning the fall and redemption of man, are so veiled in mystery of language, that without a comment, or with one, and even with that of St. Paul, they give us no clear and distinct ideas, nor any thing more than forms of speech and words to pronounce. They who under this pretence, such as it is, introduce reason where reason has nothing to do, explain what revelation has left unexplained, and define articles of faith, which are either defined in the Word of God, or which no mortal has any right to define, introduce afterward their theology, under the name of moral theology, where that has nothing to do, and corrupt the unwritten law of God even with less pretence than they corrupted the written. I charge this double corruption upon them the more boldly, because every one, who is in the least conversant in their writings, is able to bring numerous instances of both, and to show, that I

may

may keep to my present subject, how they have established doctrines and decided cases of conscience, in direct opposition to the most known and the most sacred duties of natural religion, till they have rendered men infinitely worse than they would have been in Hobbes's state of nature, without any religion or law whatever. Two things alone have checked this torrent of iniquity, to some degree. The first has been the interposition of the civil power. The second has been the insuperable difficulty of determining men, generally and constantly, and out of some peculiar circumstances, to violate the laws of their nature, as individuals, or as members of society, by precept, by example, or by any authority whatever. The light of nature, like that of the sun, may be eclipsed: it cannot be extinguished.

Notwithstanding all the abuses of private and publick morality, therefore, that the passions of some men may commit occasionally, and that the particular interest of others may invite them to propagate, even under the mask of religion, these two internal proofs of the divine institution of the law of nature, the conscious certainty that we have, and the plainness and simplicity of it, are in their full force, and superior to those of the same kind which any other revelation contains. It may seem strange to many, that the plainness and simplicity of the law of nature should be brought as a proof of it's divinity. They have been accustomed to think, that types, symbols, figures, dark enigmatical expressions, and every thing

thing that has the appearance of mystery, are essential marks of a divine revelation. Such might a revelation made to superior Beings appear to us; and such would a revelation made to us concerning the divine nature, and the secret œconomy of the divine Providence, not only appear to be, but really be mysterious and unintelligible, and therefore no revelation at all. For this very reason, it is agreeable to all our ideas of wisdom to believe, that no such revelation was intended to be made to us. Such means could not be proportionable to any end. The allwise Creator could not mean to inform his creatures unintelligibly, nor to leave an explanation of his nature, and of the whole œconomy of his providence, to be made by men who undertake both presumptuously; and who dishonour both, as far as man may be said to honour or dishonour God, by all the silly paradoxes they advance dogmatically, and without having, for the most part, any just notions even of the wisdom and dignity of human conduct in superior forms of life. Such mysterious means then could not have been effectual, unless our improvement in metaphysical knowledge had been the end of Divine Wisdom, which it would be impertinent to suppose: and if the end of this wisdom was to inform us of the divine will, to show us the perfection of our nature, and to teach us to tend toward it in the pursuit of happiness, such means are quite unnecessary. They are, therefore, proportioned to no end. They are, therefore, unworthy of God!

Clearness,

Clearness, precision, and a true conformity to the nature of things, are the perfections of human, and much more of divine laws. Though the nature of the universe, and the rules by which God proceeds in the government of every system contained in it, of ours among the rest, are unknown to us, yet is the nature of our own system, as far as the morality of actions is concerned, sufficiently known to us, and the laws of our nature consequently, since they result from it. Here then is all the clearness, all the precision, and all the conformity to the nature of things, that God can give, or man desire. From hence we may, and we ought, to form our judgment of all laws, that are assumed to be divine. They must not be incomprehensible; because, though they proceed from the divine intelligence, they are adapted to the human. God does not show his own nature in them. He shows us our nature, and our duty; by the first of which we stand in the lowest relation of intellectual creatures to their Creator, and by the last, in that of subjects and servants to a gracious and beneficent lord and master, who gives us laws neither ambiguous nor captious, and who commands us nothing, which it is not our interest to perform.

Another internal proof of the divinity of natural law must not be passed over without mention. As all is simple and plain, nothing is mean nor trifling in it. This religion shows us a Supreme Being, veiled in the majesty of his nature, but manifested

manifested in all his works, to be the true and only true object of our adoration. In the existence he has given us, and in the benefits that attach us so strongly to it, this religion shows him to be the first and greatest object of our gratitude; in the established order of things, subject to so many vicissitudes and yet so constant, to be the reasonable, as well as necessary object of our resignation; and finally in the wants, distresses, and dangers, which these vicissitudes bring frequently upon us, to be the comfortable object of our hope: in which hope, the religion of nature will teach us, no doubt, to address ourselves to the Almighty, in a manner consistent with an entire resignation to his will, as some of the heathen did. But this religion will not teach us to pray, as if we informed Omniscience, or expostulated with Omnipotence, as those who pretend to be the most reformed among christians are accustomed to do; nor to make religion a service of show and outward gesture, as your pretended catholick church has done. The religion of nature teaches to worship God in spirit and in truth, that is, inwardly and sincerely. It neither confounds spiritual pride and enthusiasm, nor theatrical pomp and superstitious rites with devotion. Fraud, envy, malice, silent and secret vices, more dangerous often to society than those of greater eclat, have lurked behind the former. The latter, though they affect the senses without touching the heart, have passed in general, and still pass, for divine worship. God has been served in a man-

ner, which the most sanguinary tyrant would abhor, by some people. By others, with all the circumstances of that low adulation, which earthly monarchs require, and whereof the priests themselves have claimed a share. That there is a middle proceeding fit to be observed, between a theatrical worship and a worship stripped of all outward solemnity and pomp, I am ready to admit. In this, and in a multitude of cases, the law of nature or right reason may approve such laws and institutions as nature or reason has not prescribed; because they may be proper, and even necessary means to promote the observation of this law. But then they ought to pass for forms directed to this purpose, for human not for divine ordinances. Let the priest wear a ridiculous cap and breastplate, or fringes and bells on his robe, but let it not be said, that the Supreme Being took care of his attire, or that such trifles as these were the institutions of divine wisdom.

There is nothing in the law of nature unworthy the Author of it; and much less can it, or does it contain any thing inconsistent with itself. The rules by which God governs even the system to which we belong are unknown to us; but this we know most certainly, that he cannot command in particular, what he forbids in general. He who has made benevolence to all rational beings the fundamental law of our nature, can never command some to rob, or to murder others; to usurp on the rights of their fellow creatures, and

to

to exterminate whole nations. In short, the internal proofs of the divinity of the law of nature, both positive and negative, are such as render this law the true criterion of every law and religion, that pretend to the same original. It may be disputed, perhaps, whether our abstract notions of the moral fitness and unfitness of things afford a sufficient rule, whereby to judge of the truth of any religion, that is said to come from God. But there is no room to dispute, whether the conformity or nonconformity of such a religion to that law, which God has given to all his human creatures, enacted in the constitution of their nature, and discernible by the use of those faculties he has given them likewise, is a rule sufficient for this purpose. Was it otherwise, we should have no sufficient rule at all. Men might dispute eternally about the dictates of right reason, and the will of God would be entirely out of the question; or it would be made determinable by an indeterminable question, what those eternal fitnesses and unfitnesses of things are, according to which, and in a dependency on which, the will of God must proceed, and be signified to his creatures. That this would be so, is evident in the different opinions that have been entertained, ever since theology was made a science, concerning the existence of evil as well as good, and concerning the distribution of them. But if we confine ourselves to the revelation God has made of his will in his works, and to the knowledge we have, that his will is necessarily determined

mined by his wisdom, we shall have a certain and sufficient rule by which to judge of his laws. What is the will of God; is a question easily answered. What ought this will to be, is a question we cannot presume to answer without absurdity and impiety both. To answer the first, we need to go no higher than the moral obligations that arise in our own system, and of which we have very adequate ideas. To answer the last, we must go up to the nature of the Author of nature, and to a multitude of other natures, the assuming of which puts the Supreme Being just in the case of his creature man. The nature of the human system is independent on man; and yet he is obliged to derive the rules of his conduct from it. Just so, upon this assumption, the abstract natures and eternal essences of things are independent on God; and yet God was obliged to make, and is obliged to govern his system according to them.

By employing our reason to collect the will of God from the fund of our nature, physical and moral, and by contemplating seriously and frequently the laws, that are plainly and even necessarily deducible from thence, we may acquire not only a particular knowledge of these laws, but a general, and in some sort an habitual knowledge of the manner in which God is pleased to exercise his supreme power in this system, beyond which we have no concern. We do not see the divine painter, if I may employ so low a comparison on so high a subject: but we grow

accustomed to his manner, and we learn to despise those who present us a signpost daubing, and call it impudently the work of Raphael.

IX.

As certain, as plain, as important, and as consistent as the law of nature is, it has been blended with many absurd and contradictory laws, in all ages and countries, by legislators, who published them, sometimes in their own name, and sometimes in the name of God, as well as with customs of the same kinds; which, if they arose independent on laws, obtained the force of laws. Eusebius, in the first book of his evangelical preparation, gives a long catalogue of them; and he gives it for a very good purpose, to show in in several instances how such laws and customs as these had been reformed by the Gospel, that is, by a law which renewed, and confirmed, and enforced the original law of nature. Sextus Empiricus, an ancient, and Montagne, a modern sceptick, collected numerous examples of the same sort, but to a very bad purpose; to show, if they had been able, that there is no such thing as a fixed immutable law of nature, which obliges all men at all times alike. They sought it where it is not to be found, and, not finding it there, concluded it was to be found no where. This doctrine has been promoted by Pyrrhonians, scepticks, and academicians, between whom it is neither

ther obvious nor worth our while to distinguish, as well as by dogmatical atheists; for they who doubted of God's existence, or who denied it, could not fail to doubt of or to deny the existence of his law. Of all these it will be sufficient to mention the admired Carneades, the sum of whose disputation upon this subject Lactantius has preserved; and although it be one of those trite commonplace citations, which abound in learned writings, yet it deserves a particular mention; because it expresses, in very few words, the full absurdity of those who deny a natural law, and points out the two principal blunders on which their whole reasoning proceeds.

Carneades then affirmed *, "that laws were "made by men, for their utility; that they were "therefore various, as the characters of those "who made them; and changeable among the "same men, according to the various circum-"stances of time: but that there was no law of "nature. That all men, and all animals, were "carried to their several kinds of utility by "nature, so that there could be no justice, or "if there was any such thing, it must be ex-"tremely foolish: because, in providing for the "good of others, the just would hurt them-

* Jura sibi homines pro utilitate sanxisse, scilicet varia pro moribus, et apud eosdem pro temporibus sæpe mutata; jus autem naturale nullum esse. Omnes et homines, et alias animantes, ad utilitates suas, natura ducente, ferri: proinde, aut nullam esse justitiam, aut si sit aliqua, summam esse stultitiam; quoniam sibi noceret alienis commodis consulens.

" selves." That laws were made for utility, both those which we call civil, and those which we call the laws of nations, that they are various as the characters of men, and changeable as the circumstances of time, no one will deny. But will it follow, that there is no such thing as a natural law, such as the wisest philosophers, and even the ancient poets have acknowledged, although a little confusedly according to their custom, yet in plain and direct opposition to this doctrine? a law, neither invented by men, nor enacted by human authority, " ne- " que hominum ingeniis excogitatam, neque " scitum aliquod populorum?" a law not coæval with the divine mind, as Tully * would have it, when he says, " orta autem est simul cum mente " divinâ;" but such a law, as he describes in the words that stand immediately before these, a law proceeding from the nature of things, " ratio " profecta à rerum natura;" a law which did not begin when it was first reduced into writing, " quæ non tum denique incipit lex esse cum " scripta est," but when it first existed " sed tum " cum orta est:" and it existed first, when that system of nature from which it results, " unde " profecta est," began to exist? The first part therefore of this academical declamation proved nothing against natural law; and Carneades might as well have affirmed, that the Athenians had no laws before Solon, because Solon gave

* Tully de Leg. l. 1.

them

them some; or that rapes were lawful at Rome before Sextus Tarquinius ravished Lucretia, because there was no written law before that time which forbid them. The second part contains two blunders, that run into one another. It is a blunder surely to assume, that men and all other animals are carried indiscriminately by nature to their end, utility; without distinguishing between natural instinct common to both, and superior reason peculiar to man. It is a blunder surely to assume, in consequence, that since utility is their object, justice is a folly. Men may have pleasure, to which instinct hurries them, but they cannot have happiness, to which reason leads them, without justice, according to what has been already laid down: and it is wisdom therefore, not folly, to forego the first in some instances, in every instance where the least incompatibility is found between them, that we may secure the last. The good of individuals is so closely connected with the good of society, that the means of promoting one cannot be separated from those of promoting the other: and Socrates was in the right to curse the men who first divided in opinion things that cohered in nature, morality and utility: "qui primum hæc naturâ "cohærentia opinione distraxissent*." I might have quoted the latter part of what Lactantius makes Carneades say, and which is said to show the great hurt that justice would do, in order to

* Tully de Off. l. 3.

show more truly the great hurt that injustice does. If the Romans, and all those who were possessed of empire, had been obliged to restore to every people the unjust usurpations they had made upon them, these conquerors would have been obliged to return to their huts and to their ancient penury, "ad casas esse redeundum, et " in egestate et miseriis jacendum." But it is almost too trifling to deserve mention; since, transferred from the law of nations to the laws of particular societies, it objects to justice the great mischief of obliging a robber to restore to the owner what he has stolen from him, and denies that restitution is just, although reparation of injuries is plainly essential to justice.

If we had all the volumes that have been written concerning the laws, institutions, customs, and manners of the different societies of men, we should be rather perplexed than informed concerning the true system of natural law: and Montagne might challenge his readers pretty safely, to show him any one of these, which had the seal of universal approbation. But even this would not serve his purpose, nor afford any proof against the existence of a law, which human reason collects from the human system, as he vainly imagined in his zeal for Pyrrhonism. The laws of nature are truly what my lord Bacon styles his aphorisms, the laws of laws. Civil laws are always imperfect, and often false deductions from them, or applications of them: nay, they stand, in many instances, in direct opposition to them. It follows

follows from hence, not that there is no natural law, but that civil laws have been made without a sufficient and constant regard to it. Erroneous opinions of philosophers, unreasonable institutions of legislators, are often derived from the principles of nature, and may be traced up to them. The fountain from which they flowed was pure. They grew foul in their course; and no wonder they should, since the channels through which they passed were infected with human passions, human prejudices, and human ignorance. Such laws as cannot be traced up, even under these conditions, to the original of all law, are the arbitrary dictates of mere will, imposed on some men by the force or fraud of others, and confirmed by education and custom.

Thus is the law of nature hid from our sight by all these variegated clouds of civil laws and customs, as the divine Author of it is by those of superstition and artificial theology. Some gleams of true light may be seen through them. But they render it a dubious light, and it can be no better to those who have the keenest sight, till these interpositions are removed. Then, indeed, the objects appear in their full and genuine lustre to every sight; for that which hid them both could affect neither.

X.

MANY hypotheses have been made to account for the beginning of civil society, for the nature

of it, and for the motives to it. All of them have some degree of probability, and might have some share in framing those political congregations and unions, by which mankind has been divided into distinct nations, and the great commonwealth, as the Stoicians called it, not improperly, into distinct states. But no one of these must pass for universal, nor be supposed to have done the work alone. In general we may say, that the foundations of civil or political societies were laid by nature, though they are the creatures of art. Societies were begun by instinct, and improved by experience. They were disturbed early, perhaps as soon as they were formed, both from within and from without, by the passions of men: and they have been maintained ever since, in opposition to them, very imperfectly, and under great vicissitudes, by human reason, which is exercised in particular systems of law for particular states, in leagues and covenants between state and state, and in tacit agreements, that constitute what is commonly called the law of nations.

The first principles of every thing, that requires human understanding and human industry to be employed about it, are rightly laid in nature; they are obvious to our search, and we are able to discover and pursue the consequences of them in speculation and in practice. But in doing this, we are left, as I may say, to ourselves. We owe the first discoveries to our own observation, and the progress we make afterward to the strength of

our own understandings, to our application and industry. We may do this well or ill; we may do too little or attempt too much, according to the use, and the right or wrong judgment, we make of our faculties; for the "bona and mala "ratio," that Cotta insists upon so much*, is nothing else.

It is in great measure otherwise in the case of civil polity. In this we are not left to ourselves. We are not left to make the discovery, nor to proceed in consequence of it, by the strength of our own understandings. We are led to it by the hand of God, as it were, and even before we have the full use of our understandings. When God made man, he made a creature, the happiness of whose being depended on his sociability with animals of his own species. He made him therefore a sociable animal, an animal capable of feeling the immediate pleasure and advantage of society. The necessity of natural precedes that of artificial society; and the former, which is connected by instinct, prepares us for the latter, to which we are determined by reason. We are made capable of both in their turns. The infant cannot conceive the nature of those covenants, that constitute civil society, any more than he can propagate his species. Neither his mental, nor his corporal powers are arrived at their maturity. The ignorant man does not know them, because he has not informed himself, nor been informed by

* Cic. De Nat. Deor.

others

others, about them; and he who is born stupid is out of the case. I say this the rather, to expose once more the futility of that argument, which has been mentioned already. To prove, that the child, while he is a child, and the ignorant man, while he is ignorant, can neither institute civil society, nor comprehend the nature of it, serves to no other purpose, than to compose to slumber a reader of common sagacity, who perceives at one glance the different senses, though equally true, in which men are reckoned qualified for civil society, and fishes to swim, or birds to fly, or oaks to bear acorns*.

You poets have given beautiful descriptions of a golden age, with which you suppose that the world began. Some venerable fathers of the church have given much the same descriptions of another golden age, with which they suppose that it is to end, and which will make some amends for the short duration of the paradisaical state, since the latter is to continue a thousand years. Now, though I do not believe that men were as good, any more than I believe that other animals were as tame, by nature, as you represent them to have been in the primæval world; yet I do not believe neither, that such a state as Hobbes assumed, ever did or could exist, nor that men ever were in a state of absolute individuality at any time before the institution of civil society. How they came into the world, reason will tell us

* Vid. Puffen. Lib. iii, c. 1.

no better than history or tradition does. To suppose, that the first of human kind were quickened into life by the sun, and were animated systems of mud, as the Egyptians did, I think, according to Diodorus Siculus, would be too absurd; neither could we conceive, if the hypothesis was admitted, how these human insects were able to provide for their wants, and to rear themselves up to manhood, whatever we assumed the physical constitution of the world to have been at that time. If we are persuaded then, that this world, and the inhabitants of it had a beginning in time, we must of necessity assume, that the first men and the first women, or that one man and one woman, at least, were produced in full strength and vigour of body and mind, prompted by instinct to an act of which they might not foresee the consequence, and prompted by self-love, when they saw it, to love themselves in their children, and to nurse and educate their offspring.

Thus natural societies and paternal governments began. I shall not inquire how far the latter is founded in that blind act of generation, whose motive and end is the mutual pleasure of man and woman alone. Much less shall I misspend any time in comparing the opinion of Grotius*, which is favourable to paternal, with that of Hobbes, which is so to maternal authority†. This only I will observe, by the way, that if Hobbes advanced a paradox, it was such a one as he

* Lib. ii, c. 5. † De Cive, c. 9.

might

might have maintained with advantage against Grotius, and even with more against Filmer, who left the word "mother" out of his quotation of the fifth commandment. Grotius did not presume thus far, but he gives the preference to paternal authority, in the case of any dispute between the two, on account of the preeminence of the sex, "ob sexus præstantium." Another writer would have urged, that if the right of parents over children was acquired by generation, as Grotius * affirmed, the right of the mother ought to be preferred, in case of any dispute, since her right by generation can never be doubtful; the father's may. She is always a real mother: he may be often a reputed father, and the argument "ob sexus præstantium" is, in this particular instance, more applicable to the woman. But however this may be, the paternal authority, arising from education, is clear: and that instinct, which determines parents to take care of their children, gives them, by the law of nature, all that authority over them†, without which they could not take this care. This authority is, and must be, absolute, while their children are unable to judge for and to direct themselves. It becomes limited, when their children are able to do this without their help, and yet continue to live in the same family. It ceases, when their children go out of their family, and acquire independency, or even paternal dominion of their own.

* Generatione jus acquiritur parentibus in liberos.

† Grotius, Ib.

Thus

Thus far the law of nature is plain: and this is sufficient to show how we are led by the hand of God, that is, by the circumstances in which he has ordained that we should be born; by the necessary dependance of children, by the instinct of parents, by information, by habit, and, finally, by reason; how we are led, I say, to civil through natural society, and are fitted to be members of one, by having been members of the other. This is the case of every one in particular, and has been that of mankind collectively considered.

All the inhabitants of some other planet may have been, perhaps, from their creation united in one great society, speaking the same language, and living under the same government; or too perfect by their nature to need the restraint of any. But mankind is constituted very differently: and although the natural law of our whole species be the same, yet we are by nature incapable, on many accounts, of uniting under one form of government, or of submitting to one rule of life. Our nearest approaches to this state are vastly distant from it; and even these were made by slow degrees, and with great variety of imperfection; although nature herself, by directing the first, made all the rest the more easy, as she made them the more necessary. Men were never out of society; for if they were divided into families before they were assembled into nations, they were in society still from their original: and the want of comprehending that which is natural, and that which is artificial, properly distinguished, under

under the same general term, has produced much confusion in reasoning on this subject, and has served to maintain many a false argument. Bayle*, for instance, denies, that the peace, the happiness, and even the preservation of mankind, depend on society. How does he support his paradox? As ill at least as he supports the inutility of religion to government. He cites Sallust to prove, that the aborigines in Italy, and the Getulians and the Lybians in Africa, had neither laws nor magistrates, nor forms of government. He cites Pomponius Mela, and he might have cited many other authorities, ancient and modern, to much the same purpose; for authors, by repeating one another, propagate the same mistakes very often, and increase the number of witnesses, without strengthening the testimony; which may have happened on these occasions for aught he knew. But this he knew, this he should have observed, and this he would have observed, if the observation had made for him in this place, for he makes it in all those where it does make for him, how much authors are apt to exaggerate in their descriptions, and the characters they draw. How barbarous were those nations, who broke the Roman empire, represented to be, the Goths for example, or the Lombards? and yet when they came to settle in Italy, and to be better known, how much less barbarous did they appear even than the Greeks and the Romans? What prudence

* Pens. Diver. 118.

in

in their government? what wisdom in their laws? But I touch this without insisting on it. Let it be, that the aborigines, the Getulians, the Lybians, and the inhabitants of the inward parts of Africa, had neither written laws, nor civil magistrates, will it follow, that they had no customs which were among them equivalent to laws, no fathers nor elders, that supplied the place of civil magistrates, no forms of government, because they had not those of civil government? Will it follow, in short, that they lived without society, because they lived without political society? The very passage cited from Pomponius Mela shows the contrary. They were dispersed in families indeed, and these families were governed by no law common to them all, nor by any joint consultations, "In familias passim, et sine lege dispersi, nihil in "commune consultant." Just so are the Arabs of the desert, many of the Tartars, and other vagabond people at this day, not united by any national constitution: but so far from being without society or government, that their several families, or tribes, or hordes, are so many societies, and often better regulated than those that appear to be more civilised. Bayle, and the author he cites, had nothing in their minds but political societies of human institution, and did not advert to those that are natural. When he affirmed, "that these people multiplied, and preserved "themselves without living in society," and denied, on the authority of these examples, "that "social life is absolutely necessary to the pre-

"servation

"servation of the human race," he did not enough consider, that it was impossible they should multiply without forming societies, and that he might have said just as well, that a country, overrun with independent companies of soldiers, had none in it, because these companies were not yet formed into legions or regiments.

Ancient traditions, sacred and profane, how imperfect and uncertain soever they are, give us sufficient reason, by their concurrence in this general account, to believe, that mankind was at first dispersed in families, which formed so many distinct societies under paternal government. The Mosaical history contains the descent of one, that of Seth, down to the Flood. There was no need of mentioning that of Cain, which was to be wholly destroyed in this terrible catastrophe. The descent of the family of Shem, after the flood, is most carefully recorded, and those of Ham and of Japhet are occasionally mentioned: for which difference a very good reason may be found, since the genealogy of the patriarchs, and of the people of God, was to be deduced from Shem. Our divines find a further reason. The Messiah was to proceed, above two thousand years afterward, from a branch of the same family: and therefore the greatest care possible was taken to preserve the genealogy, as well as to perpetuate the race; of the latter of which Patrick gives a most remarkable instance in his commentary on Genesis. If the daughters of Lot committed incest with their father, we are not to ascribe it to unnatural lust,

but

but to their innocence, their simplicity, and a laudable concern for the preservation of their father's family; for they believed all mankind destroyed, according to Irenæus; or, at least, they might believe, that none were left who might go in unto them, "juxta morem universæ terræ*. Our learned bishop assumes, much more ingeniously, and with much greater regard to virgin modesty, that these young women had the same eager desire, which then possessed the hearts of good people, to fulfil the promise of the Messiah. It was that which put them on this otherwise monstrous crime. It was that which sanctified it, in the intention, though not in the event; for the two accursed races of Moabites and Ammonites were the fruits of this incest.

XI.

I HAVE not spoken of this family to introduce the anecdote just mentioned, instructive and edifying as it is, but to show, by an illustrious example, what the first societies of men were, and how civil societies arose out of natural, as natural societies arose out of one another. When any of these grew too numerous to inhabit the same country, or dissensions arose among them, as it happened in the case of Abraham and Lot, and of Esau and Jacob afterward, they separated.

* Vid. Hb. Gen. c. xix.

When the father of the family preferred one of his sons to all the rest, as Abraham had done, and as it was necessary that Isaac should do, in order to give Jacob the preeminence over Esau, and the Israelites over the Idumeans, the families separated likewise, and new families were formed by the swarms that issued from ancient hives. The increase of families was not only great in those prolifick ages, as we may observe by the numerous posterity of the two brothers, Esau and Jacob; but we may conclude, from reason and analogy both, that if families sometimes separated, they sometimes united too, for mutual conveniency; and that in this manner several dynasties were formed, which had more settled establishments than the vagabond families. How little these dynasties were, we may judge by the defeat which Abraham gave, with an army of three hundred and eighteen of his servants, to the four kings who had beat the five, and pillaged Sodom and Gomorrah. There has been much learned dispute about the Egyptian dynasties: and they who have corrupted Manetho more, very probably, than he did the truth, have delivered them down to us in such a broken, transposed, interpolated condition, that nothing almost which is probable can be collected from them. Why should we not believe, that his thirty dynasties were contemporary, not successive? Why should the Egyptians not have been under the dominion of several petty kings, as well as their neighbours, when the title of king was bestowed so very liberally?

rally? On the whole, it cannot be doubted, I think, that the first societies of men were those of families, formed by nature, and governed by natural law, nor that kingdoms and states were the second.

Neighbourhood, an intercourse of good offices, and, in a word, mutual conveniency, might give a beginning, by the union of independent families under compacts and covenants, to civil societies. But the principal cause of such artificial or political unions was of a very different kind. We cannot suppose, that all the members of every family lived in a state of uninterrupted concord. There was a quarrel, and one brother assassinated another, even in the family of the first man. But still in societies, as confined as these, the father's eye was over the whole community; paternal authority, not the royal fatherhood of that ridiculous writer Filmer, was always ready to interpose, and the remedy of separation was always at hand, when every other failed. The state of mankind altered extremely, when families had been long separated, whatever the cause of separation was; and when the natural bands were not only loosened, but lost and forgot in the course of generations; when there was no longer any regard to one common ancestor; when there was no authority to interpose between different people, and to influence and direct their conduct, as paternal authority had done, where different members of the same family were alone concerned; then mu-

tual injuries became more frequent, and their consequences more fatal.

As fast as the distribution of mankind into families, and as paternal government ceased, men went out of a natural into a political state. The former was so little what it has been represented, a state of individuality, that individuality could never be properly ascribed to creatures born in society, and members of it as soon as born. Individuality belongs to communities, not to persons. Families might be conceived as individuals, though not men, in the state of nature; and civil societies much more so in the political state. The reason is plain. We have a natural sociability, that is, we are determined by self-love to seek our pleasure and our utility in society, as it has been said; but when these ends are sufficiently answered, natural sociability declines, and natural insociability commences. The influence of self-love reaches no further. Societies become in all respects individuals, that is, they have no regard to others, except relatively to themselves; and self-love, that promoted union among men, promotes discord among them. Like the philosopher of Malmesbury's wild men, they act as if they had a right to all they can acquire by fraud or force: and a state of war, so far from being the cause, has been the effect of forming distinct societies, though by the general plan of nature the propagation of mankind makes it necessary to form them. Such is our inconsistency, such are the contra-

contradictions that unite in the human character.

Hobbes, and Cumberland, in opposition to him, have said much about the societies of ants and bees. I shall compare them with those of men no further, than the comparison is immediately apposite to my present purpose. The bees then, for it will be enough to speak of one species, and the comparison will hold best with that of which we have most experience; the bees, I say, cooperate visibly to one end, the general good of their respective communities, not by choice nor compact, most probably, nor by authority neither, for their monarchs have no stings to punish the disobedient or the lazy; but by one invariable and constant direction, that of instinct. If reason could supply the place of instinct, be always at hand, and determine with as much force, men might be as good citizens as bees. But the rational creatures neglect their reason, or degrade her, in the intellectual œconomy, and make her the vile instrument of their appetites and passions. This is so much the case, that men would have been what Hobbes assumes that they were, if the Divine Wisdom had not constituted them so that they are, as soon as they come into the world, members of societies, which are formed by instinct and improved by reason. What reason cannot do by herself, she does in some degree by the adventitious helps, which experience enables her to acquire, by orders and rules of government, which every man concurs to maintain; because

every man is willing to control the passions and restrain the excesses of others, whatever indulgence he has for his own. I said, in some degree; for, even with these adventitious helps, reason preserves human societies unequally, and by a perpetual conflict: whereas instinct preserves those of bees in one uniform tenour, and without any conflict at all. The passions rebel against reason; but instinct is reason and passion both.

Thus bees live with bees in their several hives, and have much advantage over men in domestick life. But their sociability goes no further. Whenever any of these families, for to such they may be compared, transmigrate or send out colonies to seek new habitations, cruel wars ensue, if you will take the word of Virgil, as good a naturalist at least as Homer, for it. I have read somewhere, that Origen thought God had thus determined them, to set an example of making war to men. I had rather believe the father misunderstood or belied; and assume, that the same instinct governs these animals no longer, when they forsake the hives; so that their own ferocity, or that of their kings, carries them to all the excesses of insociability. Every king is a Joshua, or an Attila, and under his command

" corpora bello
" Objectant, pulchramque petunt per vulnera
" mortem."

As long as he lives, there is no composition, no peace

peace, no truce to be had. They fight "usque "ad internecionem." As soon as he falls, they plunder their common hive, and the family or little state is dissolved.

"Rege incolumi, mens omnibus una est.
"Amisso, rupere fidem, constructaque mella
"Diripuere ipsæ, et crates solvere favorum."

It is not quite the same in the case of mankind. Their families or hordes, and the colonies they send out, unite sometimes for mutual utility with others, as I have hinted. Reason, which had cooperated with instinct before, takes the place of it now. They coalite amicably by covenants, they make laws by common consent, and from being members of a natural, they become such of a political society. It seems, however, that these political societies have been more frequently formed by compositions after wars, by a forced submission to the law of conquerors, and by associations made to prevent conquest. We easily conceive, that the insociability of families made the strongest invade the weakest, and the weakest unite against the strongest. When larger communities were thus formed, the same insociability, and therefore the same policy, continued; so that fear may be said to have been a principal inducement in this manner to mankind, not to form societies, as it has been understood, but to submit to civil government.

Communities, formed by the union of different families, were not only more numerous than any particular families, but they were composed of

heterogeneous parts, of members unconnected by consanguinity, or the habit of living together, and connected only by accidental circumstances, and the tie of covenants. These circumstances, or the dispositions they had produced, might alter; and the tie of covenants, without a supreme power to inforce the observation of them, could not hold. Paternal authority, therefore, which had been sufficient to maintain, in some degree, peace and good order in societies composed of a few, and those few members of the same family as well as of the same society, might be insufficient, on both these accounts, to maintain the same degree of peace and good order in communities more numerous, and incorporated rather by art or by force, than by nature. Thus it became necessary to establish a power superior to that of the fathers of families, and, as fast as men went out of the state of nature, to substitute artificial to natural government. This was not done all at once, I suppose, nor every where in the same manner. But it seems most probable, that these governments were, in general, monarchical. I know, that some writers have thought otherwise: but they have no more right to affirm than I have, who am far from affirming. We must all guess, and probabilities must be weighed. It has been said, "that when men, who were in a "state of natural freedom, and natural equality, "resolved, by common consent, to submit themselves to civil government, they chose the democratical form, in order to keep this govern-

"ment

"ment in their own hands; and that the fathers "of families, who had been used to inde- "pendency, must have concurred in the same "choice*." Now the very reverse of this seems more probable to me. The fathers of families, who could not all be kings upon this change, would have preferred aristocracy to democracy, and the multitude would have preferred monarchy to both. The former would have been desirous to retain some image of their ancient authority, and the latter would have slided into a form of government that resembled the paternal, to which they had been accustomed, much more easily than than they would have constituted one entirely new, and the nature of which, for want of experience, would not have been very obvious to their apprehension. This easy transition, from paternal government to monarchical, seems to have been very well understood by Lycurgus, who, when he was advised to establish a popular government in Sparta, bid his adviser try in the first place to establish democracy in his own family†. One may conceive equally well how monarchy changed, by the abuse of power, into aristocracy, or democracy; and how these changed, by the usurpation of power, into monarchy. But the most ancient traditions, and the authority of ancient writers, I think, concur in establishing this matter of fact, that monarchy, I do not say absolute monarchy nor tyranny, was

* Puff. L. vii, c. 5. † Plut. in Vita Lycur.

the

the first form of civil government. There are many passages to this purpose, that might be collected, if it was worth my while. But there is one in the beginning of Aristotle's Politicks so much in point, that it must by no means be omitted. He says, "that regal government was "the first; because they, who, by their uniting, "formed the first states, had been before that "time under the same regimen in families, which "they afterward continued in kingdoms."

I know, that the power of these kings was limited, as their kingdoms were small, in the heroical ages. But still they were kings, and not the less, but the more properly and the more truly such, because they were restrained from being tyrants. When Justin says, that, in the beginning of things, the government of people and nations was monarchical *, he confirms the opinion I am of. When he says, that the people were bound by no laws, and that the will of princes held the place of laws †, we must not imagine, that these first monarchies were governments of mere will ‡. The tenour of tradition contradicts any such proposition. I might quote the authority of Thucydides and others against it; but I choose to quote that of Justin himself against it, who says, in the same place, that it was not am-

* Principio rerum, gentium nationumque imperium penes reges erat.

† Populus nullis legibus tenebatur, arbitria principum pro legibus erant.

‡ Just. l. i, c. i.

bition,

bition, but a moderation tried and approved by all good men, that raised up princes to this dignity *. Thus the Medes, weary of that anarchy into which their families were fallen, chose Dejoces, a man famous for wisdom, integrity, and justice, to be their king. It was not by virtue of their royal prerogative, that these first kings gave laws, written or unwritten, permanent or occasional; for it is probable, that in those ancient days there were few or no written bodies of laws: and you can tell better than I can, whether Homer once mentions the word in his poems. But, however this might be, the first kings had neither arbitrary nor legislative power by virtue of any real prerogative; on the contrary, they were chosen kings, because they were chosen legislators, and the goodness of their laws recommended them to the throne, and maintained them in it. The power of making laws was so far from being originally and exclusively annexed to monarchy, though it sometimes made monarchs, that Draco, who never was one, imposed his laws, which were said to be writ in blood because of their extreme severity, on the Athenians; that Solon, who never would be one, repealed these laws, and established others; and that Pisistratus, who made himself one, far from repealing those of Solon, governed by them. The first kings were limited monarchs. They earned

* ——Quos ad fastigium hujus majestatis non ambitio popularis, sed spectata inter bonos moderatio, provehebat. ib.

the

the sovereignty by great and good actions, held it from their people, and were accountable to their people for the exercise of it. Such I mean as came to their crowns by consent, and in countries where common utility united families in civil society, and neither conquest nor the fear of it.

XII.

THE attempt which so many learned and ingenious men have made, with infinite labour of study, to fix points of chronology and history concerning ancient nations, that of the Egyptians particularly, have seemed to me, ever since I know what they are, extremely ridiculous. They have seemed so the more, because some general and useful truths may be collected, without any trouble, from the broken and fabulous materials they employ with so much trouble, and to so little useful purpose. The original of the Egyptians and the order of their dynasties will never be known. The most ancient tradition, sacred and profane, supposing them all authentick, would be still insufficient for this end. But they are sufficient for another. They show us the nature of government, and the character of mankind, in those early ages. They show us the first kings, and the primitive government of Egypt, such as I have described; and such they continued to be as long as their gods reigned; that is, as long as their kings pursued the true ends of their institution,

tion, and made their glory consist in the good government of their own people, not in the conquest of others *. Osiris and Isis civilised their manners, and taught them to sow corn and to plant the vine. The first Mercury taught them the use of letters, instructed them in the sciences and in arts, in that of physick especially, both for the body and the mind, and was, besides, their first or greatest legislator. Other Mercuries succeeded Thot. Cotta makes them five in all †. These explained the hieroglyphicks of the first, improved on what he had taught in six and thirty thousand volumes or rolls, as some legends affirm, and completed that wisdom of the Egyptians, wherein Moses was instructed; for no man, except a few, will believe, that the daughter of Pharaoh sent into Greece to procure preceptors for her foundling.

The Egyptians were little known to the Greeks, from whom all our knowledge of them is derived, till the reign of Psammetichus, much more than a thousand years after the dynasties of their gods, and their golden age, as we may call it; and yet even then the first principles of good policy and of a limited monarchy subsisted. They pierced through various revolutions of government, and maintained themselves in reverence during an immense number of years. The same thing has happened, and by the same means, among the

* Fines imperii tueri, magis quam proferre, mos erat. Intra suam cuique patriam regna finiebantur. Just. ubi supra.

† Apud Cicer. de Nat. Deor.

Chinese,

Chinese, whom I might have quoted for the same purpose as I quote the former; since their empire began as early, has lasted near three thousand years longer, and resembles that of Egypt in many respects; in these particularly, in a great reverence for antiquity, in a strong attachment to those primitive institutions by which the order of their government has been preserved, and their monarchs, how absolute soever they may appear, have been restrained in the exercise of their power.

Now these governments, like all others which men have instituted, and to which they have submitted by consent, though they are artificial, are however instituted by virtue of the law of our nature, and are, in this sense, of divine appointment. That sovereignty, or supremacy, for such it may be called in a true sense, which was at first in fathers of families, not for their sakes, but for the sake of their offspring, and the propagation of the human species, belongs to one sovereign or supreme magistrate; to more than one, to the collective or representative body of the people; and sometimes to all these, according to the various constitutions of civil governments, which were indifferent before they were made, but cease to be so, and are obligatory on every member of the community afterward. There must be an absolute power in every civil society placed somewhere. As it is placed in one man, or in more, a monarchy arises, or an aristocracy, or a democracy: and, when it is divided between

all

all these, a mixed government, which is, I presume, the best of the four. By this representation, so evidently true, that no man who is in his wits can doubt of it, we may learn to despise and abhor certain venal or stupid writers in favour of monarchy. Some of these would persuade, like Filmer, that Adam was an absolute monarch by creation; that his right has descended to kings; that all other men are slaves by birth, and never had a right to choose either forms of government or governors. Some again would persuade, like Hornius, whom Puffendorff* cites and refutes, that although men have a right to make covenants, and constitute civil governments, they have no power to confer sovereignty on princes. They may choose a king to govern them, that is, they may name a person on whom this sovereignty, this majesty, this power to govern, which they cannot give, will descend, by a sort of divine emanation, from God, who can alone give them. Filmer's hypothesis will be always lame as well as absurd, till Adam's right heirs, for all other princes are by this hypothesis no better than usurpers, can be certainly distinguished. They would be so by Harry Martin's expedient, if they were born with combs on their heads, and every other man with a bunch on his back. But nothing of this kind has yet appeared among the phænomena of nature, and, till it does, we must content ourselves to acknowledge such kings as we have. The hy-

* Lib. vii, c. iii.

pothesis

pothesis of Hornius does not expose us to the same uncertainty, and we may know our king by much the same rule by which the Tartarians know their god. When a king is chosen, sovereignty and majesty descend immediately upon him, and he is completely a king. When a great Lama is chosen, the soul of Foe enters immediately into him, and he is completely a god. There are many more foolish and knavish hypotheses of the same kind; and the principal promoters of them, in every country, have been the clergy, whose flattery to princes had well nigh succeeded among us, so as to make the cause of tyranny, what it has been, and still continues to be made in other nations, the cause of God. But though we believe, that monarchy was the first form of civil government, and that paternal government might lead men to it; yet may we believe very consistently, and we must believe, unless we resolve to believe against fact and reason both, that this, like every other form of government, is of human institution, established by the people, and for the people; and that no other majesty, since the word imposes so much, is inherent in it, than that which belongs to the supreme power of every state, wherever that power is placed. Natural government was designed to last, and did last, till civil government became necessary. Nature instituted one, and directed human reason to the other. She meaned the same in both cases, the good of the governed. Her institution and her direction could not have different ends. She intended, no doubt, that they who

had been treated like children, under the influence of instinct, should be treated so likewise under the influence of reason.

XIII.

I HAVE said thus much, in order to show, that political societies grew out of natural, and that civil governments were formed, not by the concurrence of individuals, but by the associations of families. It is the more necessary to repeat and to inculcate this distinction, because, for want of making it, and by representing mankind to themselves like a number of savage individuals out of all society in their natural state, instead of considering them as members of families from their birth, and such too long to be at any time the solitary vagabonds of the other hypothesis, our best writers, even Mr. Hooker, and much more Mr. Locke, have reasoned both inconsistently and on a false foundation. Inconsistently, because they sometimes acknowledge paternal government to have preceded civil, and yet reason about the institution of civil, as if men had been then first assembled in any kind of society, or had been subject to any kind of rule; for to say, that the law of nature was of itself such a rule, and that every one of these independent inhabitants of the Earth did, or might exercise justice for himself and others, on those who violated this law, was language unworthy of Mr. Locke,

and unnecessary to his system, and yet it is the language of his second chapter, in his second book of Civil Government. Falsely, because it is easy to demonstrate, that mankind never was in such a state of nature as these authors generally, the best and the worst, have assumed, by demonstrating, that the generations of men could not have been continued in such a state. It is impossible we should know, by history or tradition, how the first civil governments were established. It is so impossible, that if any history or tradition pretended to give such relations, they would lose deservedly all credit for this very reason. But we may guess with great probability, by analogy from what we know; and we may reject without presumption the whimsies, that speculative men invent, in contradiction to this analogy, and to the visible constitution of human nature. "If we "may not suppose men ever to have been in the "state of nature," says Mr. Locke*, "because "we hear not much of them in such a state, we "may as well suppose the armies of Salmanasser "or Xerxes were never children, because we hear "little of them till they were men, and embodied "in armies." But with submission to this great author, the comparison is not at all to his purpose, nor helps him in the least to answer the objection he supposed might be made to him. No man would be mad enough, most certainly, to deny, that all these soldiers had been once chil-

* Civ. Gov. c. viii.

dren,

dren, though he neither knew them nor had ever heard of them in their childhood. But, to make the comparison apposite, no man should be able to affirm, that all these soldiers had been members of other communities before they were embodied in these armies. The question is not, whether men lived together in the state of nature since the world was their common habitation, but what the state of nature was, whether it was composed of men who lived together in families, and whether these families, by uniting together, gave a beginning to political societies; or whether it was composed of as many solitary individuals as there were men in the world, and whether these men, independent and equal one among another, met amicably together, and set up government without any better preparation for it.

Locke insists much on the natural equality and freedom of mankind; but he seems to carry his notions on the subject a little further, than nature and the reason of things will allow. We may distinguish a personal and a social equality. Nature has been far from constituting the first, and the creatures of no other species are probably so unequal in this respect as those of the human. The utmost efforts of art cannot give them even the appearances of equality. But nature has really, if not so apparently, constituted the last; for the father was a son, and the son will be a father; the magistrate might have been a subject, and the subject a magistrate. Nature has determined nothing in these cases, and therefore

these last destinations, when they are made with a partial inequality in these societies of men, are due solely to the folly of men, to their neglect of natural indications, not to the indications of nature, and to the imperfection of all human establishments; so that the reverse of them would take effect, for the most part, if the indications of nature were observed and followed. He who sits on a throne would inhabit a cottage, and he who holds a plough would wield a sceptre.

That all men are born to be free, is undoubtedly true; and therefore I think, that they never were in such a state of nature as Locke assumes*. His state of perfect freedom, so he calls it, would have been a state of war and violence, of mutual and alternate oppression, as really as that which Hobbes imagined to have been the state of nature. He distinguishes, indeed, between liberty and licence, and supposes a law of nature in force to restrain the latter. But as he supposes, at the same time, that every man had an equal right to be the executioner of this law, as well as the judge, and to punish the offenders against it, not only for his own preservation, but in order to preserve mankind in general, it is plain, that this hypothesis implies the same absurdities as the other; and that the state of mankind under the law of nature, according to Locke, would have been very little, if at all better than the state of nature, before there was any such thing as law,

* Ib. c. ii.

according

according to Hobbes. The pretence of law in one would have done as much hurt as the want of it in the other; and it is easy to conceive what tyranny and oppression would have prevailed universally, if every man, beside being judge in his own cause, had been a universal judge and executioner.

Mr. Locke doubted not but his doctrine would seem very strange to some men; and, in truth, they must be very strange men, to whom it does not appear such. He asks, however, before it be condemned, to have this question resolved, by what right princes or states can put to death or punish an alien for any crime he commits in their countries? The alien is not subject to their laws. They must punish him, therefore, by the law of nature; and, if by the law of nature every man hath not power to punish offences against it, he does not see how the magistrates of any community can punish an alien. This is the question, this the argument; and a sufficient answer may be given to both, without consulting Grotius, Puffendorff, or any of the oracles of law. Though an alien does not owe allegiance to the sovereign power of the country wherein he is an alien, because two distinct allegiances cannot be due from the same person at the same time; yet he is under the protection of that government, and a subject of it, who should rob or murder him, would be punished by the laws of it. He is therefore liable to be punished by the same laws,

and it is not true, that they who make them and they who execute them are to him, in such cases as these, men without authority. The laws that concern men as denizens only concern him not, for he enjoys none of the advantages peculiarly and exclusively attributed to denizens. But the laws that are necessary to preserve the peace and good order of a community concern every man who lives in it, and the alien submits himself voluntarily to them when he resolves to do so. He can be entitled to protection on no other condition. He accepts this condition: he is punishable therefore by his own consent, and the municipal laws, not the laws of nature alone, condemn him justly. But if the former did not speak to him, if he was not bound to hearken to them, as Locke affirms too generally and too rashly, would there be no difference between the right which he assumes to belong to every man by nature of punishing offences against her laws, as this man soberly judges the case to require, and that right which a court of justice has to proceed by stated rules, that reason authorises, and general consent approves, against an alien, who violates at once the particular laws of a community and the universal laws of nature? Would there be so little difference, that one could not stand without the other, nor the conduct of princes and states in punishing aliens in these cases be justified, unless this strange doctrine were admitted? I think no man who is capable of reflection will be of this mind. But thus it happens to men

men of the greatest genius, when they grow to be over fond of an hypothesis. They pursue the trains of their abstract, that is their general ideas, wherever these carry them. Thus they are led to maintain propositions so little conformable to the real constitution of things, that he who reasons less on general notions, and confines himself more to observe this constitution in every particular, will have frequent occasions to discern a wide difference between the speculations of philosophers and the original invariable system of nature.

I am not as much persuaded as Mr. Locke was, that all political societies began from a voluntary union. Many of them did, and I think, that this union was a voluntary union of families in societies that may be called legal, because they were made according to natural and divine appointment; for those that may be called illegal will fall under another consideration. I think thus because the most early traditions, and the most ancient as well as modern histories, even those that are cited to prove the contrary, show me mankind, not only in their childhood, but in their manhood, assembled in families before they were so in civil societies. Joseph Acosta, who is cited by Locke, says, "there was reason to conjecture, that the "people of Peru had neither kings nor common-"wealths for a long time." But how did they live during this time? Were they so many individuals scattered about the country without any form or appearance of society? By no means. They lived in troops, as they do at this day in

Florida; and we know how the people of Florida and North America live at this day, by a multitude of persons, missionaries and others, who all represent them as tribes or families, that observe the precepts and customs of their ancestors, that have publick assemblies for consultation, wherein their elders preside, and that give the supreme command over them, in time of war at least, to persons they elect, as other savages submit to the more permanent authority of their caciques. I think it evident beyond all contradiction, from observing the constitution of human nature, physical, and moral, that mankind could not have subsisted, nor have been propagated, if men had been ever out of society, and that having been educated till their years of discretion in it, though they might possibly but rarely change societies, they would never go out of society, nor could become such unassociated independent creatures, as they are supposed to have been by the other hypothesis, till they became members of some political society. I think it easy to conceive, how men were prepared, by living in natural, to live in political societies; and impossible to conceive how strolling savages, who knew no subordination, nor had been accustomed to observe any rules of social life, could be picked up one by one, as it were, and reduced at once under the laws of any civil government. Whenever this was done, paternal authority had, no doubt, a great share in determining their families to unite with one another; but if we believe, that the consent

sent of every family was collectively taken, we shall assume no more than what is actually practised among the savages on every occasion, of making war and peace, of huntings, and transmigrations from one settlement to another. In short, I think, as tradition, history, an analogy to what passes in some sort before our eyes, and the actual constitution of human nature lead me to think; whereas much abler men are led into different extremes, to support different hypotheses. To support the divine right and absolute power of kings, Filmer advanced the silly and slavish notion of royal fatherhood. Silly, indeed, as well as slavish, it must be reputed; since though the power of the father was, on many accounts, greater and lasted longer than that of the mother, and since he could not therefore have talked of royal motherhood, if it had served his purpose, with as much seeming propriety as of royal fatherhood; yet is it certain, that even the paternal was a temporary power, as it has been explained above, and that when it continued longer than the minority of children, this was due to gratitude, to habitual reverence, or to circumstances of conveniency, and in no sort to any natural right that the father had. To deduce therefore from hence a right and power, such as Filmer would ascribe to kings, is perhaps one of the greatest absurdities that was ever committed to paper. A very commendable zeal to explode these false notions of government, and to assert the cause of liberty, carried Locke into another extreme,

extreme, very unnecessarily, as I apprehend. He assumed the state of nature to be such as could never exist, and the method of establishing civil societies to be such as could never be executed. Will it be said, that he meaned only to give an abstract system of the natural rights of mankind? I shall ask, if it be said, to what purpose was it to make any abstract system of rights, that never did nor could exist, and of a method of establishing civil government, that never could be taken? It could serve surely no other purpose, than to give us a notion of natural liberty very different from the real constitution of nature, by which we are less able to preserve liberty without some sort or other of government, than we are liable to lose it by the abuse of government. I shall ask, in the next place, whether the right of mankind to be governed by law, and not by will, under every form of civil government, be not as well established by referring the original of all these forms to the consent of men assembled in families, as to the consent of men dispersed, God knows why, after having been educated in one kind of society, and assembled, God knows how, to establish another.

XIV.

As it is much more reasonable to judge, in all cases, by a consideration of the actual constitution of human nature, than to run the risk of

mistaking what is true by imagining what may be so; it is likewise both reasonable and necessary, on the subject spoken of here, to look as far back as we have any light on the natural and political state of mankind; in which review we shall find sufficient inducements to think, that the state of nature was not a state of anarchy, but a state of government, and that some form or other of it subsisted at all times and in all places, however these forms may have varied. We distinguish between natural and political society; but the real difference between them is not so great as we imagine. Nature instituted the former, but we cannot doubt that reason and experience improved it, without changing the form from time to time, as the circumstances of families altered. When these were altered so far, that the same form would do no longer, men altered the form itself. They kept nearer to it in some societies, and went further from it in others. The institution ceased to be that of nature, it became that of art. But in all other respects, there was no more reason, perhaps, to say, whenever and wherever this happened, for it would be ridiculous to assume that it happened every where at once, that a new state of mankind arose in those places and at those times, than there has been to say so on every great revolution of government since, when monarchies have changed from elective to hereditary, when aristocracies or democracies have been raised on their ruin, or mixed governments on those of all three,

Mention

Mention has been made of the Egyptians, who appear to have been, if any people we know of were such, the Aborigines of their country. The accounts which history gives of their political constitution, and those anecdotes which tradition has preserved concerning the original of it, incline, and almost determine one to think, that it was formed in the manner which has been assumed of forming political societies for mutual advantage, or common defence; that the union of families composed several small dynasties, and the union of dynasties one great empire; that it was so formed on principles of common utility, and without the insociable design of invading others, till Sethosis, or Egyptus, or Sesostris, and other conquerors arose, who invaded the nations of Africa, of Asia, and even of Europe, as the Ethiopians and Arabians invaded Egypt. The other great empire, the Babylonian or Assyrian, of which the Grecian antiquaries, who knew nothing of China, relate so many wonders, seems to have been formed in another manner.

Lawyers speak of illegal communities of bodies of men who unite under certain conditions, and become societies to break all the rules of sociability; to rob, and to plunder, like the ancient Greeks spoken of by Thucydides, or the modern Arabs and Tartars. Some of these have never settled in civil governments. They have gathered from time to time, like vapours into clouds, have produced storms, marked their course by devastation, and done great, but transient mischief.

Other

Other confederacies there have been, as illegal as these in their institution, designed to invade the possessions of others, and to form political societies by conquest against the laws of nature, instead of forming them by compact agreeably to it.

As I assume, with more probability on my side than such hypotheses have generally, that the reigns of the most ancient kings of Egypt were called the reigns of the gods, on account of the wise laws and institutions by which they promoted the peace and happiness of that people; so we may assume, that the Assyrian empire was founded and supported, from the first, by violence. Who Nimrod was, or Belus, or any of those that have been named in the variety and uncertainty of traditions, among the founders of this empire, when they lived, and what they did, it is impossible to say. Even Marsham, who laboured this point so much, with all his sagacity, and all his learning, left it, as he found it, in the dark. But as Nimrod stands represented, in the Mosaical history, a mighty hunter before the Lord, he gives us the idea of a warrior; and we may believe, without straining the sense of ancient anecdotes too much, that Bel, Belus, or Baal, who was so sanguinary a god, had not been a king of great moderation, nor had acquired power by persuasion rather than by force, by the arts of peace than by usurpation and war. Justin says, that Ninus was the first, not to make war, but to change

change the nature of it*, and to extend his empire by subduing his neighbours. The Egyptian Sesostris, and the Scythian Tanaus, much more ancient, had made war for fame alone, and, content with victory, had abstained from empire †. Their kingdoms, which each nation reputed to be the most ancient of the world, and which were so, perhaps, of the world they knew, had been established long before these wars begun. Arts and sciences were more improved among the Egyptians: primitive simplicity among the Scythians. But it is probable, that neither of them engaged in wars, till self-defence made them necessary, or till the ambition of their princes gave occasion to them. Then Sesostris harnessed monarchs to his chariot. Then the Scythians imposed a tribute on Asia, rather as the trophy than the reward of their victory ‡. The first Assyrian kings, on the contrary, established their monarchy by force, in an age when the illegal confederacy of a few families was sufficient to give the most forward and the most popular man among them the title of a mighty hunter, and the means of forming a political society on a principal of ambition, and by usurpation on the other little states, unskilled and unable to resist: "rudes ad resis-" tendum."

There must needs have been a multitude of nu-

* Avitum gentium morem.

† Contenti victoriâ, imperio abstinebant.

‡ Magis in titulum imperii, quam in victoriæ præmium.

merous

merous families, or little states, in these early days, and in the countries we speak of here, since Joshua conquered one and thirty kings in the land of Canaan. It is easy, therefore, to conceive how such a man as we assume Nimrod to have been, on the authority of Scripture, and Belus after him, if they were different persons, for that one was the Saturn and the other the Jupiter of the Greeks is not so very certain; that such a man, I say, might unite by consent both men and families of men, as fierce as himself, in confederacies to invade others. Whatever use they made of this, whether they contented themselves to conquer and to ravage, or whether, as they had united by consent, they obliged their neighbours to unite with them by force, it seems, that Ninus profited of their success to do the last. He extended his dominion by victory, and as he extended it, he confirmed it. Thus the Babylonian empire was founded by force of arms, and thus it was maintained; till, as force had raised it, force destroyed it, and illegal confederacies put an end to what illegal confederacies had begun.

If we consider the true ends of society, to which the general nature and reason of things direct mankind, we should find it hard to conceive how they could be induced to unite their families on any other motives than those of common utility, and common defence, against the little robbers that have been mentioned; or how, when a superior force made them safe from these, they should

should choose to become great robbers themselves, and to invade and conquer, as if their happiness had depended more on subduing other governments, than on a wise and just constitution of their own. But if we consider the particular nature of man, wherein there is one principle, that directs him agreeably to the general law of nature, and another, which is nothing more than the impulse of appetites and passions, that are of subordinate use in the human œconomy, but were not designed to be the laws of it, we shall easily conceive how the conduct of mankind has become, in these cases, and almost in all others, repugnant to nature, reason, and their own common sense.

The first impressions that are made on societies, like those on particular men, last long, and the worst longest. The character of a few eminent persons, nay of some one who has acquired fame, authority, and power, especially if he has had the legislative in matters religious as well as civil, becomes that of a nation, grows confirmed by custom, and passes for natural and reasonable in despite of nature and reason. This happens in particular states, and this has happened in the great commonwealth of mankind. If some men have been deified for the good many have been so for the hurt they did; and conquerors, the most noxious of all animals, havebecome objects of adoration. However unlike nations may be to nations in their dispositions and manners, all of them, even the weakest, seek their own advantage, real or imagi-

nary,

nary, at the expense of others. Thus have the civil societies of men acted toward one another from their primitive institution; for if some set the example, the others soon followed it, and while every particular state has gone through various forms of government and revolutions of fortune, the universal state of mankind has been little less than a state of perpetual anarchy. Families kept men out of that state of individuality which Hobbes, and even Locke, supposes. But political societies have been always individuals.

XV.

BESIDE the two manners that have been mentioned, in which civil societies were formed, there was a third very near akin to the second, that came into frequent use, when the number of people increased in some countries faster than their industry, and the order of their government made provision for them; or when, for some other reason, the greatest part of a community, and the sovereign power in it, resolved to drive out a smaller part, that they judged noxious to the whole. This manner of establishing new governments, when it was done by force, and it was seldom done with the consent of the invaded, was full as illegal, relative to the law of nature, in the invaders, however softened by pretences of necessity, as the second. It was more bloody too, when they, who defended their ancient posses-

sions were more able to resist, and they who sought new habitations were more numerous than either of them had been, when kingdoms and states were first formed, and colonies were first planted. The inhabitants of Gaul were grown so numerous, that in the very beginning of the Roman empire, in the reign of the elder Tarquin, the Celtick Gauls, who sacked Rome two hundred years afterward, began to send their colonies abroad, at the instigation of their king Ambigatus*. He thought it necessary to exonerate his kingdom, over crowded with people. "exonerare prægravante turbâ regnum." He authorised the expeditions, by setting his nephews at the head of them, by giving them commissions to settle wherever the gods should direct, by auguries, "in quas "dii dedissent auguriis sedes," and by levying such formidable armies for this purpose as no nation should be able to resist, "ne quæ gens arcere "advenientes posset." This account, that Livy gives of the Celtick invasions, may serve, in some sort, for those which other nations made on the Roman provinces, long after his time, and in the decline of that empire. The Ostrogoths, the Visigoths, the Vandals, and the Lombards, to whom the Franks, although an assemblage of adventurers perhaps, rather than one people, may be added, were the principal nations, who broke down the barriers of the Roman empire, and who established themselves in several provinces on the

* Liv. lib. v.

ruins

ruins of it. They were all detached to seek new habitations from the various and numberless families and societies of people who inhabited Scythia, that is, the immense extent of country beyond the Rhine and the Danube, as far as the Baltick northward, and the Euxine and the Caspian, at least, eastward. We know little about them, while they remained in their deserts, and that little is very confused, and no doubt very fabulous. But this, in general, is certain, their numbers increased so much in every society, and the fertility of the country which every society possessed, as well as their skill to improve it, was so little proportionable to the wants of such numbers, that they were continually sending forth new colonies to seek new habitations, one at the expense of the other, driving and driven out by turns. The same necessity, and the same habits of invading continued when the Roman empire, divided by Constantine, and weakened by his Christian successors, was no longer able to repel their incursions. They had too, beside necessity, another strong temptation at this time. The expeditions they undertook were in themselves more inviting than any of the former, "haud "paulò lætiorem viam dii dabant," as Livy says, when he compares that of Belovesus into Italy with that of Sigovesus into the Hercynian forest. They removed to better climates, to countries more fruitful, or more cultivated, as well as more adorned than their own; and the surprise of Athanaricus, king of the Visigoths, who had

made a peace with Gratian for presents, and principally for victuals, when he came to Constantinople, at the invitation of Theodosius, is nothing less than surprising, although Jornandes describes it to have been extreme.

A multitude of examples might be brought of kingdoms and states, that arose from such transmigrations as these, of Greeks, of Phœnicians, and of other people. Sometimes they were formed by agreement, a few instances of which are to be found in history and tradition, but much oftener by violence, and sometimes by such circumstances of cruelty, as were sufficient to exterminate the lawful possessors; one instance of which, beside those already pointed out, requires a particular mention in this place. It is not only to be reputed more authentick than any other, because it makes a part, and a principal part of sacred history, but it is more full and more marvellous in all the particular circumstances of it, and shows another occasion, beside that of a too great increase of people, on which one part of a community was desirous to seek out new habitations, or was compelled to it by the other. The wandering family of Abraham, that had hovered long about Egypt, and had gone thither often for bread, to the want of which these pastors were much exposed, settled in that country at last, under the protection of Joseph, and continued in it above two centuries. That they did not attempt to establish a government of their own in it, like other strangers who came from barren into fruitful

fruitful countries, is easily accounted for by the smallness of their number, as well as by the situation of Joseph, and their relation to him. But it is not so easy to account for the patience, with which they bore, after the death of Joseph, a cruel servitude of fourscore years, to which the tyranny of the Egyptians had reduced them, when their number increased in every generation so vastly, that they could bring, at the time of the Exode, six hundred thousand fighting men into the field. This very increase might seem incredible in any other history, notwithstanding the calculations that have been made, to show that it does not exceed the natural multiplication of a people, among whom polygamy and concubinage are established. But admitting these immense numbers, and this extreme patience of the Israelites, naturally impatient, rash, and unruly, to be consistent; admitting, that the expectation of a promised land, whereof their father Abraham had taken possession for them, by erecting altars in it, as the Spanish adventurers took possession of several countries in America, by erecting crosses in them, which they conquered afterward, and claimed by virtue of this right of possession to belong to them; admitting this expectation, I say, as an additional reason why the Israelites submitted to their bondage so long, and made no attempt to establish an independent kingdom or commonwealth in Egypt; yet will it be hard to conceive, how they could find it so difficult to withdraw themselves out of this country, when Mo-

ses determined them to it. An army of six hundred thousand men was sufficient to have conquered Egypt. The Arabians probably, and the Persians certainly conquered it with a less force than they might have employed merely to march out of it.

Such considerations may lead one to think, that the accounts pagan authors give of their Exode are not wholly fabulous, and that it is an example in point of the case I assumed, the case of people driven out of some communities, because they were for some reason or other not only burdensome, but noxious to them. The Israelites were not guilty of sedition or rebellion. They bore their stripes patiently. But as their stripes made them willing to leave the country, an epidemical infectious distemper in the Lower Egypt might make Pharaoh desirous to drive the inhabitants of that part of his kingdom into the neighbouring deserts; and if he followed them to the Red Sea, it might be rather to recover the jewels, and the vessels of gold and silver, which they had stole, under the pretence of borrowing, than to stop them and bring them back. Tertullian * has preserved a tradition, which favours this supposition; for he relates, that the Egyptians sent messengers to Moses in the desert to demand restitution, that the Israelites on their side demanded to be paid for their labour while in servitude, and that an account being stated, the balance seemed

* Adv. Marcionem, Lib. ii, c. 20.

to

to be much in favour of the latter. Thus you see, that the Egyptians robbed the Israelites, not the Israelites the Egyptians, as it has been thought.

Mr. Selden has given us the same story*, and two others, as they are told with some little difference in the Babylonian Gemara, and a book called Beresith Rabba. This overlearned writer does not decide whether the facts are true, or whether they are rabbinical inventions, "ingenii "rabinici figmenta." They deserve, however, to be mentioned, because of their immediate relation to the anecdote just now quoted from Tertullian, and to the right the Israelites had to the land of Canaan. The anecdote is much the same. The scene where it passed, and the persons among whom, are alone changed. Josephus, and others after him, and like him, have sounded high the reverence and munificence, "reveren-"tiam atque munificentiam," says Selden, which Alexander the Great showed to Jaddus the high priest, and to the whole nation of the Jews, when he received them under his protection, for they purchased his protection, much as the priests of Jupiter Hammon did, one by flattering prophecies, the other by a flattering genealogy. Three controversies, then, were decided in their favour, at the tribunal of this prince, against the Egyptians, the Africans, and the Ismaelites, or Arabs, according to the rabbins, those great compilers of

* De Jure Nat. & Gent. juxta Discip. Ebræor. Lib. vii, c. 8.

Jewish traditions. The Egyptians demanded restitution of the silver and gold which they had lent the Israelites about a thousand years before, at the time of their Exode, and insisted on the passage where Moses says, that God gave his people favour in the eyes of the Egyptians*. But Gibeah ben Pesisa, the famous lawyer, who was counsel on the other side, pleaded, that six hundred thousand of the Israelites having served the Egyptians four hundred and thirty years, the former had a just demand on the latter for this service; and this debt, which was computed for a time so much longer than that of the bondage of the people of Israel, and for numbers so much greater than theirs at any time perhaps, but certainly during the far greatest part of the time, that they were even known to the Egyptians; this debt, I say, we may well believe exceeded the value of a few jewels, and vessels of gold and silver, and some raiment, or old clothes, that they carried away with them. In short, the Egyptians were condemned, in this suit, at Alexander's tribunal: So were the Africans, who demanded the land of Canaan, as the estate of their father Canaan, and therefore their inheritance. The lawyer of the Jews quoted the curse pronounced against the son of Ham, more unfortunate than guilty; asked, if the possessions of slaves did not belong to their masters; insisted that the Africans were still

* Deum dedisse gratiam populo in oculis Ægyptiorum, ut postulata concederent eis, seu mutuo darent quæ ipsi peterent.

such

such to his clients in equity, though not in fact, and sent them away in confusion. The cause of the Ismaelites, who pretended to be coheirs with the Israelites, came on last, but they were soon silenced by producing the will of Abraham, as Moses recorded it, and in which the patriarch gives all his estate to Isaac, except some legacies to the children he had by his concubines. Well might Selden say, that these suits were of a wonderful nature, "miræ sunt hæ disceptationes forenses," wherein both sides agreed to have the cause decided by arguments drawn from the law of the Jews, from their history, and from their interpretations of both, without any regard to a prescription of so many ages. But it is time that I return to speak of the manner, in which the Israelites proceeded in the acquisition of new habitations, and in forming not only one commonwealth the more in the world, but the most singular establishment, ecclesiastical and civil, that ever was formed; for such it must be allowed to have been, unless any one shall think, that it appears to us more singular than it really was, because we do not know all, as we know some of the laws, customs, and pretensions of other ancient nations.

When I include with the Israelites in this transmigration many of the other inhabitants of the Lower Egypt, and suppose, that a common distemper, rather than a common religion, unless that religion was idolatry, united them in it, nothing is assumed unreasonably, as every one, who considers how little fit the Israelites, so prone to

idolatry

idolatry themselves, were to convert others from it, must agree. But whatever the religion of this mixed multitude of Israelites and Egyptians was, before they put themselves under the conduct of Moses, they became the same people in this, and in every other respect afterward. They entertained the same hopes, and marched with confidence under the same leader to conquer new habitations. Well might they march with this confidence, when miracles accompanied them in one continued series; and it is even surprising, that they should despond at any time, after the first miracle had been wrought at the passage of the Red Sea, though Josephus goes out of his character on this occasion, and instead of magnifying, diminishes the wonder, by comparing this passage to that of Alexander's army, who marched on the strand, or waded through shallow water along the Pamphilian coast.

There were, beside the miracles, many circumstances in this famous transmigration of the Israelites, which deserve our notice for their particularity. One of these is so much to the present purpose, that it must be mentioned. The Israelites remained forty years in the desert, before they undertook the conquest of the promised land; a time sufficient to wear out the leprosy, if they were afflicted with that distemper, as profane history asserts; the authority of which must not be lightly rejected, since Jews and Christians both are so glad to lean upon it, whenever it serves to explain or confirm any point of sacred chronology

logy or history, and since the impertinence of thinking it sufficient for that purpose, and insufficient for any other, would be too gross. There is another reason given, in the history ascribed to Moses, why the Israelites were kept so long in the desert. When they came to the borders of the promised land, they mutinied, distrusted God, who was already declared their God, their King, and the general of their armies. They threatened to choose another leader, and to return to Egypt. Upon this provocation it is said, that God resolved to keep them, as he did keep them, wandering in the wilderness till the whole generation, of twenty years and upward, except Joshua and Caleb, was dead. Then, and not sooner, they passed the Jordan.

To this reason, founded solely in the anger of God, may we not presume to add another, which proceeded from political considerations? When I say political considerations, I mean those of Moses, not those of God. Far be it from me to account for the reasons on which the œconomy of Providence proceeds, when these reasons are not plainly revealed to me in the word or works of God. Far be it from me, even to assume, that Infinite Wisdom is directed by considerations of human policy. But it is neither licentious, nor profane, to guess at those which the lawgiver of the Jews might have, and I shall do it on this occasion without any scruple.

As soon as Moses had brought the mixed multitude into the desert, the Decalogue was given, and

and other laws were published. He kept them in this station more than a year, and during that time the Sanhedrim was established, many laws, political, judicial, and ceremonial, were promulgated, and an entire system of religion and civil government was formed. All these institutions were enforced, not only by miracles, but by a most rigorous punishment of offenders; witness, among several, that massacre which the Levites made of three thousand men in one day, when they were commanded, without any other form of proceeding, to take every man his sword, and to slay his neighbour. Seven or eight and thirty years of such government as this, of a theocracy, wherein Moses, who conversed familiarly with God, spoke in his name, and delivered and executed his orders, could not fail to make strong impressions, and to form strong habits in a new generation of men, who had been bred up under it. To confirm these impressions and these habits, at the end of the fortieth year, just before the death of Moses, this legislator renewed the covenant, so it was called, between God and this people, repeated the law, exhorted them by promises and threatenings to a strict observation of it, and sent them forward, not to conquer and subdue, but to exterminate a whole race, who were devoted by God to destruction, and whose country had been given to his favourite people, the Israelites, some ages before, even before they were a people.

Other nations, those for instance who established

blished new governments in several provinces of the Roman empire, conquered, and subdued, but did not seek to exterminate. The Franks proceeded thus in Gaul, the Visigoths in Spain, the Ostrogoths and the Lombards in Italy. Driven out of their old habitations by force, or by want, they sought for new ones in better climates, and countries more fruitful than their deserts. Their spies visited the lands they designed to conquer, and as that "which flowed with milk and honey" tempted the Israelites, those that abounded with bread, and fruits, and wine invited them. But when they had defeated all opposition by the force and terrour of their arms, they ceased to be enemies, and the victorious and the vanquished soon became one people. They mixed together, and lived under common laws. But this could never be the case between the Israelites and any other nation. The first principle of their policy, ecclesiastical and civil, was insociability, and accordingly their manners were rendered unsuitable to the common nature and genius of mankind, as that great divine Dr. Barrow expresses himself, in his exposition of the Creed, "They were a chosen people, they were holy, and the rest of mankind profane." God dictated their law, he instituted, nay, he administered their government, for which purpose he resided among them, and the Levites carried him before them in a wooden trunk, between the cherubim*, as your priests

* ——Arca cherubinis instructa, dei vehiculum, et præsentiæ suæ pignus. Spen. de Theo. Jud.

pretend

pretend to carry him about in a gold or silver box. In a word, as abject as this people had been in Egypt, Moses had taught them to think more highly of themselves in the desert, and they came out of it the most unsociable nation upon the Earth. So insociable, that they could be nothing less than tyrants when they conquered, nor any thing better than slaves when they were conquered. This has been their case too. Their traditions boast a few centuries of prosperity and triumph; but in almost all ages, before the coming of Christ, as well as since, they have been what Tacitus calls them, "vilissima pars servientium." As they were formed to this character of insociability and inhospitality in the desert, so they came out of it, like beasts of prey, thirsting after blood. The Huns, begot by devils, who inhabited Mount Caucasus, on Scythian witches*, showed less inhumanity, when they were conducted by a hind, whom they followed as a guide sent them from the gods, into Europe†. Attila extended his conquests further than Joshua; but it may be doubted whether he shed more blood. More cool blood he did not most certainly. Attila gave quarter often, Joshua never; and the five kings who hid themselves in a cave at Makkeda, and who were murdered by the latter, after he had destroyed their armies, and made himself master of their country, would have been spared by the former. It was criminal among the Israelites in his time, and it was so much later, to be content with con-

* Iorn. Hist. Got. † Ib.

quest,

quest, and with spoil, or to show mercy to those they had robbed.

By such a conduct as we have described, agreeably to the Scriptures, this Egyptian colony established itself in Palestine, and formed a civil society in the last mentioned manner. There was not above one city, I think, with whom they made peace. None escaped the edge of their swords, except such as they could not conquer, and such as found refuge in foreign countries. Some found it among the Phœnicians, for to say, that the Phœnicians descended from these refugees, is to affirm what neither has been nor can be proved. Some found it in other countries, in Africk very probably*, since Procopius speaks of pillars that remained in the Tingitana, with this inscription, "we are they who fled from the face of Joshua "the robber, the son of Nane." Thus you may see how the prophecy of Noah was fulfilled, which seems so plain to Bochart, and other great scholars, and which is so little intelligible in the terms and in the application of them. But whatever becomes of the prophecy, the conquest of Canaan by this colony from Egypt is the strongest example, that can be produced, of the mischiefs brought on mankind in the establishing of civil societies by violence, and therefore much to my present purpose.

* In Vandalicis.

XVI.

THOUGH the establishment of civil societies originally, and the maintenance of them since, have caused, in the order of Providence, perpetual wars, and much of that misery which injustice and violence bring on the world, "tot bella orbem, "tam multæ scelerum facies," yet the necessity of establishing and maintaining them arises from the constitution of human nature, and is therefore indispensable. The great commonwealth of mankind cannot be reduced under one government, nor subsist without any. Just so we may observe, that the laws and constitutions of particular societies are every where various, in a multitude of instances opposite, and in many absurd. Laws and constitutions are however necessary to be made, and, when they are made, to be kept; so that we may apply to all these cases a passage in Terence, much more properly than it is applied by Grotius in favour of absolute power, "aut "hæc cum illis sunt habenda, aut illa cum his "amittenda sunt *."

But now, since the law of nature tends to promote the peace and happiness of mankind, and since this law is immutable at all times, and in all places, for which reason Aristotle compared it to fire, that warms and burns alike in Persia and in Greece, how comes it to pass, that the means

* De Jure B. et P. Lib. i, c. 3. Ter. Heaut.

prescribed

prescribed by it, answer the ends of it so ill? The answer is short, but full. Because these means are employed by men whose imperfection is such, that all they do must be of course imperfectly done. Whether they are compounded of two substances, or no, may be doubted, but that they have in one substance, or one nature, two principles of determination, cannot be doubted. Affections and passions excited by immediate objects of apparent good, are therefore continually in action, and are excited independently of the will, which they determine afterward. But reason is a sluggard, that cannot be so excited. Reason must be willed into action, and as this can rarely happen when the will is already determined by affections and passions, so, when it does happen, a sort of composition generally follows between the two principles; and if affections and passions cannot govern absolutely, nor even subject reason to serve as their instrument, they require and obtain more indulgence from her than they deserve, or than she would show them, if she was entirely free from their force, and free from their seduction.

These reflections, which have been touched upon already, may account for the unnatural manner in which the law of nature has been executed by civil societies, and for the absurd manner in which it has been copied, and improved too, as they pretend, by civil laws. Had the reverse of all this been done in a closer conformity to the law of nature, the moral state of mankind

had been truly paradisaical, but it would not have been human. We should not have been the creatures we were designed to be, and a gap would have been left in the gradation of created intelligencies. The tables of the law of nature are hung up, as it were, in the works of God, and are made obvious to the sight of man, not because he is able to observe them in their whole extent, and in every part alike, but that he may keep them constantly in view, and depart as little as possible, in the midst of so many infirmities and so many temptations, from them. God has shown us wherein our wisdom, our happiness, and the perfection of our nature consist; and he has left us to pursue these ends by the use of our reason. But reason not being given to all alike, and being very imperfectly given to those who possess the greatest share, our wisdom and our happiness are very imperfect likewise, and the state of mankind is, upon the whole, a very imperfect state. We look up much higher than we are able to rise.

Whatever violations of these laws may have been frequently committed, by particular men, and upon particular occasions, none that were deemed to be such, and perhaps few that might be called such strictly, have been enacted into laws, or have grown up into established customs by the plenary, or less plenary permission which civilians speak of, one of which gives a right to do, and the other exempts from punishment for doing. I scarce believe, on the credit of ancient and modern

dern authors, many of the stories which are told concerning the manners of people, whom they call savage or barbarous. But if I believed them all, I would still maintain, that there were in Greece, and at Rome, as many things repugnant to the law of nature enjoined, or at least permitted, as can be produced from the relations we have of the people of Colchos, of the Massagetæ, or of the Getulians; and further, that if there are not in our civilised and enlightened age as many, there are some that exceed in injustice and inhumanity all that we are told of Iroquois, Brasilians, or the wildest inhabitants of African deserts. The great and principal difference lies here. Our legal violations of natural law have a solemn varnish of policy, and even of religion, which the casuists of the law, and those of the Gospel throw over them, and which always disguise, although they cannot always hide them. Illiterate savage nations have no such varnish to employ, and their laws and customs appear to every eye but their own as unnatural and abominable as they really are. To this it may be added, that they who can write have a great advantage over those who cannot, in all such cases. They can extenuate and exaggerate matters of fact, and they seldom fail to do it, with no more regard to truth than is necessary to make the falsehood pass. If we had the history of Canaan writ by a Canaanite, that of Carthage by a Carthaginian, or that of Mexico and Peru by a Mexican and Peruvian, figure to yourself how the

perience as it was in the early ages, when mankind began to gather into political societies, a multitude of false deductions and wrong applications could not fail to be made; for nothing can be more true than this observation, that the difficulty of applying general, and even common notions to particulars, is one great cause of the errours and misfortunes of mankind. These deductions and applications were made diversly among divers people, and every one accepting those of their own growth for true dictates of nature and reason, it is easy to conceive what numberless prejudices they produced, and how the laws, customs, opinions, and manners of nations have been rendered as various, and as opposite in the very same respects, as they are and have always been. These prejudices, for so they may be properly named, were at first universally, as they are still in many parts of the world, the prejudices of real ignorance. Those of fantastick knowledge succeeded these, wherever men advanced from simplicity to refinement, "a neces-" sariis ad elegantiora;" and which of these have done most hurt may be disputed. Thus much is certain. There were prejudices of superstition to corrupt religion, and prejudices in favour of licentiousness and of tyranny, both to corrupt the first principles of civil government, and to perpetuate errour: so that when men of different families and countries, and all fraught with different prejudices, mingled one way or other

in

in the same societies, it is no wonder that their systems of religion and government were such as we find them in all ages.

The confusion was so great, that the laws of nature, and those of positive institution, were but ill distinguished, and that some or all of the first kind passed for laws of the second, while some of the second passed for laws of the first. Such examples may be found, particularly among the Jews, about whom, of all the ancient nations, we are the most concerned to be inquisitive, and of whom it is hard to say whether their traditions, or their reasonings upon them, are most precarious. They acknowledged in some sort, as it has been said, a law of nature, since they acknowledged a law antecedent to that of Moses, and unwritten precepts of universal and perpetual obligation. The rectitude of these precepts is manifest, and unknown to no man, "Rectitudo est "manifestior, utpote nemini ferè non agnita," as Mr. Selden says *, speaking after the rabbins. But these precepts were not collected by human reason from the constitution of nature. They were revealed by God himself to Noah, the Jews affirm, and were designed for all his posterity, as they were renewed to the Israelites, at the station in Mara, with a precept about keeping the sabbath, and other additional precepts. I enter into these particulars in order to observe only, what an unnatural jumble this people made of seven

* De Jure Nat. et Gent. juxta &c. L. i, c. x.

principal precepts, which composed, according to them, a code of natural and universal law, and the original source of all law, "primordia-"lem legem et matricem omnium præceptorum "Dei*." There is nothing, perhaps, more absurd nor ridiculous in the whole Jewish system.

No doubt can be entertained whether the law of nature forbids idolatry, blasphemy, murder, theft, and, I think, incest, too, at least in the strictest sense of the word, and in the highest instance of it. But surely none, except rabbins, could have blended up with these a precept, that forbids the eating the member of a living animal, which is such a piece of cruelty, that I shall not believe, on the word of Maimonides, of Arnobius, or any other author, that the kings of the nations, or the most enthusiastick Bacchanals, did it in the celebration of their idolatrous feasts; nor even that the Israelites, who were so prone to spill blood, were as fond of swallowing it in this filthy manner, fresh and reeking. This circumstance alone would be sufficient to prove, that the "præcepta Noachidarum" were an invention of the talmudists, whose practice it was to forge, and who wanted skill and knowledge to make their forgeries probable. A natural law against a practice to which there is no inducement in human nature, although men are carnivorous animals, is most rabinically, that is, impertinently, assumed. He must be a rabbin too,

* De Jure Nat. et Gent. juxta &c. L. i, c. x.

who

who is able to discover, how a precept to regulate judicial proceedings can be said to have made another head of natural law. Selden * treats of this in the last place, because he thinks it relative to the other six, which would have been given in vain, if judgments had not been established to punish the violation of them. But how could all these judgments be established by one of these seven precepts? By judgments the talmudists understand all constitutions, customs, actions, circumstances, decisions, and law cases, which are of moment in criminal causes. It would be too ridiculous to suppose judgments, in this sense, established by a single precept of the law of nature. What did this precept then command? A tribunal to be erected for the trial of all offences against these laws, or a council-chamber wherein new laws, for enforcing these, should be made †? Or did God, by one precept of natural and universal law, confirm and ratify all future judgments that should be given, and all future laws that should be made by human authority, to secure the observation of six other precepts? I can think so the less, because the judgments of his chosen people were often repugnant to the law of nature, truly so called, in particular instances; and because, in general, a spirit of injustice, which established one rule for themselves and another

* Lib. vii, c. iv.

† —Domus Judicii nunc pro tribunali aut foro—nunc pro loco aut cœtu, quo sanciuntur novæ leges—sumitur. Id. ib.

for

for every other person, ran through all their judicial proceedings.

Another instance of that confusion, which arose in men's notions concerning laws of nature and laws of positive institution, might be drawn from the decree of the first christian council, in which the apostles and the elders imposed no other load on the converts from paganism, than abstinence from things offered to idols, from blood, from things suffocated, and from fornication, according to the copy we have of it; all of which, as well as circumcision, and other observances from which these converts were exempted, made parts of the Mosaical institution *. But it appears by ancient manuscripts, and by the citations of Irenæus and Cyprian, as well as by other authorities, that another duty, which was not most certainly of Mosaical institution, and was plainly a moral obligation arising from the real law of nature, had been contained in the original decree. The converts were to abstain from doing to others what they would not that others should do to them. This instance and the former might be more explained. But enough has been said on these two subjects, and we may proceed to take notice of those instances wherein things are, and have been, forbid by civil or ecclesiastical laws, which are not only permitted in the fullest manner by the law of nature, but seem much more conformable to it, than the in-

* Selden, Lib. vii, c. 12.

stitutions

stitutions opposed to them; and of others, wherein things directly forbidden by the law of nature are, and have been, permitted, or commanded, by civil or ecclesiastical laws, and by both.

XVII.

THAT the human, like every other species of animals, should multiply by the copulation of the two sexes, and be propagated by their care to nurse and breed up their young, is undoubtedly a law of nature. Self-love, the great spring of human actions, prompts to both. But as it is more immediately determined, and more strongly stimulated by instinct, and by nature, to one than to the other, it became necessary to give this principle, by reason and by art, all the additional strength that could be given by them, or, at least, to let it lose none that it had. For this purpose it was necessary, that parents should know certainly their own respective broods, and that as a woman cannot doubt whether she is the mother of the child she bears, so a man should have all the assurance law can give him, that he is the father of the child he begets; for a likeness of features would not amount to a sufficient assurance, though I have read of a country where women were common, and where paternity was ascertained no other way. Thus matrimony forms families, which could not be formed without it; and families form states, which could not be formed

formed without them. It was this first and natural union which preceded and prepared mankind for political or civil union, and the bonds of this second union were more effectually strengthened by those of paternal and filial affection, and of consanguinity, than they could have been by those alone of accidental interests, liable to vary, and of covenants liable to be broken. On such principles, and for such purposes I presume that matrimony was instituted. They are evidently derived from the law of nature, The institution, therefore, is conformable to the law of nature, as far as it is subservient to these ends. But when it is carried further than these ends require, and that which is consistent with them, or even conducive to them, is forbid, it is, in every such respect, a mere arbitrary imposition.

Great attention has been had in every well constituted government, to promote the multiplication of mankind, and this attention must be always necessary; for if the human race is daily increasing, it is daily decreasing likewise, and it would be trifling to maintain that celibacy is less hurtful, or polygamy less necessary than they were formerly, on Cumberland's vain assumption, that the Earth is sufficiently peopled. Men who were advanced in years, and had never been married, were stigmatised at Sparta; and as well there as at Rome, and in many other places, great immunities, prerogatives, and other encouragements were granted to those, who had a large legitimate issue. The talmudists carry the obligation of getting children

so far, that they declare the neglect of it to be a sort of homicide. "Quicunque Israelita liberis "operam non dat, est velut homicida*."

Two sorts of polygamy are distinguished by the civilians. That of one man who has several wives, and that of one woman who has several husbands. All the ends of matrimony are answered by the first. It has, therefore, prevailed always, and it still prevails generally, if not universally, either as a reasonable indulgence to mankind, or as a proper, and, in the early ages, a necessary expedient to increase their numbers. Such it is, no doubt, such it must be, in the order of nature; and when we are told, that it has not this effect among the people who retain the custom at this day, either the fact, asserted by men who cannot be competent judges of it, may be untrue, or sodomy and abortions, in conjunction with other unnatural causes, may prevent the natural effect of polygamy. The ends of matrimony are not answered by the second, which has been, I suppose, a double polygamy, wherever it has been practised; since we cannot believe, that the superior sex ever submitted their prerogative to the inferior, and that several men became the property of one woman, although mention be made by Strabo of the Sabeans, among whom one woman was the wife of a whole family. She lay with the eldest all night, and drudged on with the rest all day. Other examples of the same

* Selden Uxor Ebraica, Lib. i, c. 9.

kind

kind might be quoted from modern travellers, who speak of some countries where every woman is married to seven husbands, and of others where the wife may, and the husband may not, call in assistants to the bed, by which custom the prerogative of the ancient patriarchs would be reversed in favour of women, and they would have, if I may say so, their male concubines. But, to proceed on the more probable hypothesis: the divine Plato approved, the Spartan lawgiver instituted, a community of wives, and Cæsar reports, that there were in our Britain certain amicable societies of both sexes, wherein every woman was the wife of ten or twelve men, and every man the husband of as many women. The most admired philosophers, the most famous legislators, and several of the least civilised people, Britons and others, admitted the same absurd abuse of matrimony, and destroyed one end at least of it's institution, by making the ascertainment of fathers impossible, as Diodorus Siculus says* "that of mothers too was made by a nation in "India, where the children were changed as soon "as born."

The first sort of polygamy, for the second was too contrary to nature and good policy to spread wide, or to last long, was allowed by the Mosaical law, and was authorised by God himself. There is, indeed, a very loose restraint laid on a king, in the seventeenth chapter of Deuteronomy.

* Lib. ii.

He

He is not to multiply wives, least his heart should be turned away; neither is he to multiply greatly silver and gold. Moderation was prescribed in both passages: but wives and wealth, suitable to the kingly state, were implied in both. The number of one, and the quantity of the other, are not determined. They were left, probably, to the judgment of the king himself, for whom the law was made: but the rabbins, who made many arbitrary laws of their own, under pretence of interpreting divine laws, as other rabbins have continued to do, thought fit to limit the number of queens, or of queens and concubines both, to eighteen; the ridiculous reasons for which specific number may be seen in Selden's treatise, called "Uxor Ebraica*." By the same authority, priests were allowed to have but one wife, and all other persons but four: the reason for which number it is more easy to imagine, than to express decently.

The zeal of the Jews to promote the observation of the precept to increase and multiply, was so great, that beside the establishment and regulation of polygamy, their doctors descended into many particulars for the same purpose, and among the rest were careful to appoint stated periods, beyond which it was not lawful to neglect the performance of conjugal duty in any form of life. The periods were marked even to the artificer, the countryman, and the seaman;

* Lib. i, c. 8.

and

and the wife had her remedy if the law was not observed. The prodigious numbers of which this nation appears to have consisted, from the Exode to the destruction of their city by Titus Vespasian, and the constant reparation of these numbers after so many massacres, captivities, and other desolations, must be ascribed, as I think, if we believe them to have been real, to that prodigious and constant increase of people, which a well ordered polygamy caused.

The writers, who pretend sometimes that polygamy has not the effect ascribed to it, employ, at other times, this very increase as an argument against it. But surely the argument, as well as the pretence, is false. Increase of people must be always an advantage, and can never be hurtful to any state, no nor cumbersome to particular families, unless the want of order, good policy, and industry make it so. To talk of a commonwealth sinking under it's own weight by the increase of people, as Puffendorff does in one place*, might have appeared reasonable to those ancient nations of Europe and Asia, who sent so many colonies abroad for fear of starving at home, and would, I question not, appear so at this time to the nations of Africa, who sell their children, not only to procure themselves brandy and tobacco, or other wares, but to prevent an overstock of inhabitants. The truth, however is, and it may be easily demonstrated, that numbers of people

* Lib. vi, c. 2.

are

are strength and wealth to every country, and that the law of nature, which directs the increase of them, is, in this instance, what it is in all others, the law of good policy.

Thus, therefore, the matter stands. This sort of polygamy is quite conformable to the law of nature, and provides the most effectual means for the generation and education of children. In the other state, mankind may multiply perhaps as much in the first instance of begetting, but not in the second of breeding up, for want of an equal ascertainment of both the parents: and this defect may disappoint, to a great degree, the intention of nature. Monogamy, on the other hand, or the confinement of one husband to one wife, while they both live, for I shall use the word in this sense here, will unite the care of both parrents in breeding up subjects of the commonwealth, but will not serve as effectually, nor in as great numbers, to the begetting them. The prohibition of polygamy of the first kind is, therefore, not only a prohibition of what nature permits in the fullest manner, and often in a greater degree than ordinary, for the reparation of states exhausted by wars, by plagues, and other calamities. The institution of the second sort contradicts her intention in one part, as the institution of monogamy diminishes the effect of her law in another part. The prohibition is absurd, and the imposition arbitrary.

The imposition is very ancient: however, if it be as ancient in Greece as Cecrops, and if this

kind of matrimony was the most perfect, as many assert, there would be reason to wonder how the most perfect kind came to be established by an uninspired lawgiver among the nations, while the least perfect kind had been established by Moses, the messenger, and prophet of God, among his chosen people. The Romans took many things from the Greeks, as well as from the Etrurians, at the foundation of their monarchy, although Pythagoras was no more the contemporary of Numa, than he was the scholar of Ezekiel. But from whomsoever they took the institution of marriage, the matrimonial tables, and the oath which every married man was obliged to take before the censors, declared it to be for the procreation of children; and they made laws occasionally to encourage this procreation.

If Lycurgus, on whose principles every child was the child of the commonwealth, deemed it expedient for improving the several broods, that his citizens should cross them, by lying with the wives of one another; and if the Ephori obliged one of their kings to take a second wife, when he would not part with the first, who was barren, the Romans needed to have made no great scruple of borrowing wives, to increase or to mend their race, and Cato is said to have lent his Marcia to Hortensius. Nay, Cæsar intended to procure a law, which one of the tribunes had orders to propose, and by which every one should be authorised to take as many wives as he pleased, and such as he pleased, "liberorum quærendorum causâ."

The

The passage may, indeed, have another sense; and if Suetonius, from whom it is taken, writ—— "uxores—quas et quot vellet," instead of "vel-"lent," it must mean, that Cæsar intended the new perogative for himself alone, as the occasion that introduces the anecdote, and the circumstance of directing the law to be proposed when he should be absent, "cum ipse abesset," may incline one to suspect. But, on the other hand, nothing can be more probable than this, that Cæsar considered, beside the constant waste of Roman citizens, which the exposition of infants, and perhaps the severity of paternal power, but certainly their ordinary state of war occasioned, the extraordinary loss of people which the commonwealth had sustained in his time by proscriptions, and a long course of civil war. It is probable that he considered this, and it is, therefore, much more wonderful his successor should not think, after another proscription, and another civil war, of establishing polygamy, to repair these accumulated losses, than that he, the first Cæsar, should. This was not done, however, nor was polygamy established among the Romans before they were christians. It was less likely to be so afterward, and if Valentinian married two wives, and gave leave to his subjects to do the same, by a publick edict, as the ecclesiastical historian Socrates says he did, his example was not followed. We may doubt too, whether that of Socrates, the philosopher I mean, was followed on the same

occasion at Athens. Diogenes Laertius * relates, that the Athenians decreed, when their city was depopulated by war and sickness, that every citizen might have, to increase the number of children, a second wife, besides her who was called his town wife, and of which sort he could have but one†. Socrates took the advantage of this decree, which set aside the law of Cecrops, and he despised, with a great elevation of mind, those who criticised his conduct, and threw out reproaches against him. This famous missionary of natural religion and law declared by this action, that polygamy was against neither, and that the law of Cecrops had forbid what they allowed.

XVIII.

THE reasons that determined the lawgivers of Greece and Rome, and of some few other states, to forbid a plurality of wives, which was permitted in almost all countries, may have been such as these. They saw that polygamy would create large families, and large families a greater expense than could be borne by men who were reduced to live in cities, and other fixed habitations, where property was distinguished, and where no one could afford to spend more than his legal possessions, his labour and his industry, gave him. Monogamy was a

* Vit. Socrat.

†—Uti urbanam quidem unam uxorem cives ducerent, liceret autem et ex alterâ procreare liberos.

sort

sort of sumptuary law, and might be thought the more reasonable, because, even in those countries where polygamy was established, men were not permitted to marry more women than they were able to maintain.

Another reason, that served to confirm this institution, was the part assigned to the priests in it. Dionysius Halicar.* having observed how ill women had been used to keep their conjugal vow, even in countries where a very singular magistrate†, a magistrate to preserve their chastity, was appointed, speaks with great encomium of a law that Romulus made to attach every Roman wife to her husband, by an entire participation of all his possessions and of his religious rites‡. These sacred nuptials were celebrated by a solemn sacrifice, and by the eating together of a consecrated barley cake. The natural effect of this law and this religious ceremony was such, that during five hunded and twenty years there was no instance of a divorce at Rome; for so I understand the historian, who does not refer, according to my apprehension, to any express prohibition of divorces, in the case even of these marriages, by the law that established them, as some have imagined. Thus monogamy became, by the intervention of the priesthood, a religious, as well as a civil institution. I might add, not im-

* Lib. ii. 24, 25.

† — Cui mulierum castitas curæ esset.

‡ — Omnium et bonorum et sacrorum —

properly, nor untruly, that this institution has received at least an indirect support from the vices of husbands and wives, from those very abuses which it was designed by Romulus, and by other legislators, to reform. By entering into single marriages, men satisfied the natural desire of propagating their species, and acquired the means of having a legitimate issue; while nothing hindered them, nor their wives neither, except the want of opportunity, from indulging their lust with others, in spite of their sacred bonds, and the legal property they had in one another's persons. We may believe the more easily, that such considerations helped to reconcile pagans to the seeming constraint of single marriages, since we can make no doubt, that they have the same effect on christians, who think these marriages instituted by God himself immediately, as many of the former deemed them to be enjoined by the law of nature; for what authority does in one case, custom might very well do in the other: and it is much less strange, that custom, which we call a second nature, should pass for the first and real nature, than that human authority should pass for divine.

But of all the reasons by which we may account for the prevalence of single marriages, in opposition to polygamy, divorces constituted the principal and the most effectual. With them monogamy may be thought a reasonable institution. Without them it is an absurd, unnatural, and cruel imposition. It crosses the intention of nature

ture doubly, as it stands in opposition to the most effectual means of multiplying the human species, and as it forbids the sole expedient, by which this evil can be lessened in any degree, and the intention of nature can be, in many cases, at all carried on. Although the first mention of divorces be made by Isaiah and Jeremiah occasionally, seven or eight hundred years after the law was given, they had been always in use among the Israelites: and as the right was derived, by their doctors, both from the natural and Mosaical law, so they were practised under no very strict regulations. I say nothing of the forms. The legal causes had a great latitude: a divorce was sufficiently authorised when a woman did not find favour in the eyes of her husband, because of some turpitude in her person or behaviour, or even because he found another woman whom he thought handsomer, or whom it was more convenient to him to marry*. Thus the people of God had an advantage, in this respect, over other people. Plurality of wives might have made divorces less necessary. The defects in body or mind of one would be compensated by the perfections of the others; or if they proved all alike disagreeable, the husband had the resource of concubines. The case of the Romans, and all those nations where single marriages were established, was very different. He who had a bar-

* Fœditatem personalem, negotium impudicum. Si invenerit aliam pulchriorem, aut sibi commodiorem. Seld. De Ux. Ebraic.

ren wife could not fulfil the law of nature, nor swear without perjury, as he was obliged to do, that he kept a wife in order to have children by her; and therefore Carvilius Ruga * acted very conscientiously when he was the first, if he was the first, to put away his wife. The law casuists, who decide, that barrenness is not a sufficient cause of separation, because it may be the misfortune, but cannot be imputed as the fault of the woman, might as well decide, that no accidental infirmity, which renders a man incapable of performing his office in the state, is a sufficient reason for removing him. The Romans paid no regard to such casuistry. They continued divorces in this, and many other cases; such, for instance, as ill management of family affairs, or an intolerable and incurable ill humour, which were the reasons, I presume, of Cicero's divorce from Terentia; and good reasons surely, since the husband may be ruined by one, and the peace of his whole life be destroyed by the other.

The institution of divorces was of such absolute necessity where a plurality of wives was forbid, and of so much conveniency where this plurality was allowed, that it continued on the same foot among the Romans, till christianity was established fully in the empire, and that it continues still among the Jews in the east, if not practised, for prudential reasons, in the same manner, and as openly in the west.

* Dion. Hal. ubi supra.

Selden

Selden gives a very particular account, in the third book of his "Hebrew Wife," of the occasion on which divorces were restrained, and it amounts to this. Hillel and Sammæas were of that set of men, the rabbins, who pretended to have authentick traditions, and certain interpretations of their law conveyed down to them from Moses; and who were, notwithstanding this oral rule of faith, of doctrine, and of manners, frequently in opposition, and at the head of different factions in the schools of the Jews. Two such factions had been formed, concerning the legal grounds of divorces, by Hillel, and Sammæas who had been his scholar, as Gamaliel, the master of St. Paul, is said to have been his nephew and his successor; and the disputes ran high between them while Christ was on Earth. The Hillelians maintained the original right of repudiation, and such as it was practised, not only in the case of adultery, or turpitude, but in every other case, "ob omni-"modam rem seu causam *." The Sammæans insisted on the reformation of this custom, and on a new interpretation of the law, founded on a grammatical criticism. They confined the right of divorce to the case of turpitude, alone. Christ decided the question in favour of the latter, and specified but one kind of turpitude. This decision appeared so strange to his disciples, that they were at a loss, as well as the Pharisees, to guess why then Moses had established the right of di-

* Ib. l. iii, c. 20.

vorce;

vorce; for it is probable the notion had not prevailed among them, that God tolerated superstitious practices, or permitted even crimes to have the sanction of his law, as in the present case it is said that he did, because of the hardness of heart of their fathers. The disciples, therefore, cried out, that, if this was the case, it would be better not to marry. The Jews did not submit to this decision. The same dispute continued many years; and about seventy from the birth of Christ it was decided in favour of Hillel, by that oracle from Heaven, "the daughter of the voice*," which was heard at Jabne, not far from Jerusalem, and the place perhaps where the sanhedrim was then held. But the law of grace was superior, in time, to the natural and the Mosaical law, among christians. It had a right to be so; and, besides, we may believe very probably, and very piously, with Justin the martyr, that Joseph, having suspected the holy virgin to have been got with child before her marriage, had entertained thoughts of separating from a wife, whom he could not keep according to the laws of his country †. We may believe too, on the foundation of this anecdote, that christians were prepared to understand the words of Jesus in a sense the most restrictive of divorces, and the least favourable to that institution. I said, that the law of grace was superior in time to the other; for as little as we know what the practice of christians was during the

* Filia vocis. † — Juxta patrios mores ejiciendam.

first

first three hundred years, we know in general, that great relicts of judaism remained long among them; that divorces were in use, even those which wives signified to their husbands; that the meaning of the word fornification was extended from the flesh to the spirit; and that this institution was observed, admitted, denied, to the time of Constantine, without any certain rule at all; "aliter "atque aliter*," says Selden. From that time downward, emperors published edicts; councils made decrees; fathers, and after them, schoolmen, advanced opinions; ecclesiastical and principally papal powers increased; a new jurisprudence, the child of usurpation, of ignorance, and bigotry, grew up under the care of the canonists; marriage was declared a sacrament, and this tie indissoluble.

XIX.

Before we leave the subject of positive laws, ecclesiastical and civil, that forbid those things arbitrarily, and by mere will, which the laws of nature permit; we may properly enough take notice of some restrictions relatively to marriages, which have not been so hard to impose as the obligation of single marriages. Polygamy had been allowed in most nations, divorces, I believe, in all. It required time, therefore, to abolish institutions, both of which had revelation and rea-

* Ib. c. 28.

son

son on their side, and the last of which had been confirmed by universal practice. But it required neither time nor pains to continue the prohibition of marriages within certain degrees of consanguinity and affinity. The Jews, among whom christianity arose, held such incestuous marriages to be forbidden as much as adultery, sodomy, and bestiality. The Greeks and the Romans, among whom christianity had the greatest increase, and the firmest establishment, seem to have held different opinions, at different periods, about the remoter degrees, but not to have varied about those in the ascending or descending lines; and the Romans, who made one state, were more uniform on this head than the Greeks, who were divided into many, and whose country produced many a whimsical philosopher, that affected lawgiving, beside Plato. The nations among whom no regard was paid to these degrees, but brothers mixed with sisters, fathers with their daughters, and sons with their mothers, were held in abomination, like all other nations, by the Jews, who were in return held in contempt by these and all others. These, and all others, were deemed barbarous by the Greeks and the Romans; so that their example might well have, as it had, no effect, in this respect, either on the Jews, the Greeks, or the Romans; though two of them, at least, the Egyptian and Babylonian, had been masters of the former in every sense, and though the second and the third had received the first principles of all their knowledge, and perhaps the first use of letters,

letters, from the same, either immediately like the Greeks; or mediately through the Greeks, like the Romans.

That the abhorrence of incestuous marriages should prevail among the Jews, is easily accounted for, since they founded it on a positive law of God. But how it came to prevail among the Greeks and the Romans, is not so clear. Was it founded among them on a law, and is it even an instinct of nature? This has been said, but cannot be maintained. They scarce deserve an answer, who would prove these marriages prohibited by the law of nature, on the supposition that there is a repugnancy in nature to any such copulations; as if consanguinity, like fire, produced an agreeable sensation at certain distances, and pain and abhorrence at a nearer approach; as if a multitude of nations, civilised and uncivilised, could have been determined to act unnecessarily against so strong an instinct of nature, as this repugnancy or abhorrence is assumed to be; and finally, as if the first men, who could not increase and multiply without committing incest, had been commanded to do it by the Author of nature, against the law of that nature he had just before given them.

A great deal of dull pains has been taken to inquire into the nature of shame, and to discover the motives of that modesty, with which almost all mankind, even the most savage, conceal the parts, and remove out of sight to perform the act of generation. "How comes this about", say such writers,

" writers, when the propagation of so noble a " creature as man is in itself a work of honour " and credit*?" The question might be sufficiently answered by saying, that the parts destined to this pleasant and honourable use are destined likewise to uses that are offensive to our senses; and that they show, by the necessity they are of to our being in one destination, and to the propagation of our species in another, a certain mortifying identity of nature with the vilest of the animal kind. These parts are placed, as it were, out of the way in the human fabrick; and, in conformity to this indication, the custom of hiding them, and of retiring from the sight of others when we employ them to any purpose, has grown up in both sexes, and been confirmed by education. " Hanc naturæ tam diligentem fa- " bricam imitata est hominum verecundia †." Shame or modesty, according to Tully, makes us imitate nature in this instance: but I think, that the latent principle of this shame, or modesty, is a vanity inherent in our nature, derived from an opinion of excellence and dignity. It is this that makes us fond of showing, wherever we can show it, how superior we are to other animals, and to hide, wherever we can hide it, how much we participate of the same nature.

Other reflections might be added to these, such particularly as furnish reasons for the solitude wherein the two sexes affect to copulate; among

* Puff. l. vi, c. 1. † Cic. Offic. l. i.

which

which perhaps an uncontrolled and undisturbed indulgence to their mutual lust would not be found the least. But to what purpose should this be done, when there is nothing in the assumed shame, even if we allow it to be natural, that has any more relation to incestuous than to other marriages? The shame of exposing their secret parts, and of copulating in publick, was, to be sure, just as strong in those who contracted the first, as in those who contracted the second; and it is impossible to conceive, that it can cause any natural abhorrence of one of these conjunctions more than of the other, or indeed of either. It remains therefore, that this abhorrence is artificial, and that it has been inspired by human laws, by prejudice, and by habit.

But though this be evidently true, yet is it true likewise, that the degrees spoken of are to be distinguished: for though the prohibition cannot be deduced, in any of them, from instinct, or animal nature; yet it is favoured by reasonable nature in some. The permission, that her laws give to conjunctions necessary to the propagation of the species of animals, may be conceived to be in the human less, and more full or absolute, according to the received distinction of legal permissions that I have somewhere mentioned. The conjunctions of fathers with their daughters, and of sons with their mothers, if they are thought permitted, must be thought to be so by the lowest sort of natural permission, not only for the reason Socrates gives in Xenophon, the disparity of age, from which he supposed

posed, not weakly, as it has been objected, but wisely, and providently, that several inconveniencies would arise; but for a reason of more importance, and of universal extent. The first societies, and those which compose all others, are family societies. These are natural, and the better they are regulated, the more easily and the more surely will political societies, whose component parts they are, be put and maintained under good regulations. Parents are the chief magistrates of families, and every thing that tends to diminish a reverence for them, or to convert it into some other sentiment, diminishes their authority, dissolves the order of those little commonwealths, and introduces a licentiousness of manners, which they carry with them and diffuse in the greater. This now must happen in some degree wherever the custom prevails, that fathers take their daughters, and sons their mothers for wives or mistresses, whenever they do it actually, or may do it lawfully. I need not stay to prove and to illustrate this; but may conclude on what has been said, that if natural law does not directly prohibit such conjunctions as these, it does not permit them neither in so full a manner, as to give them that sanction, which other marriages, that are reputed to be contrary to the law of nature, and that are called alike incestuous, have.

The marriages of brothers and sisters, for instance, which stand in the very next degree, may be objected to, as they may be defended, by probable

bable arguments drawn from political considerations; but no colour of an argument can be drawn against them from the constitution of nature, in which all her laws are contained, and by which they are all promulgated. It may be said, and I find that something of this kind has been said, that the intention of reasonable nature being not only to strengthen the bonds of society as much, but to improve sociability among men, and to extend it as wide as possible, in opposition to that insociability which is so apt to grow up between distinct families and states, those positive laws, which forbid marriages in near degrees of consanguinity and affinity, are conformable to nature, and drawn by necessary consequences from her laws. For this reason it may be said, that such marriages were forbidden among several of the most civilised nations in the pagan world, and that we find so many prohibitions in cases of affinity, as well as of consanguinity, in the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus. The more remote degrees were prohibited perhaps to fence in, and to secure the better an observation of the nearest; and this might be the more necessary, because of the precedent practice of mankind, who had been constituted by God, at the creation, in a necessity of committing what was now forbidden, since they could not otherwise have obeyed his first and great precept, to increase and multiply. Eve was in some sort the daughter of Adam. She was literally bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, by birth, if I may call it so, whereas other hus-

bands and wives are so in an allegorical manner only. But to pass this over, the children of the first couple were certainly brothers and sisters, and by these conjunctions, declared afterward incestuous, the human species was first propagated. If you accept rabbinical authority, you may believe, that Eve brought forth constantly twins, a male and a female, as pigeons, I think, are said to do; so that Cain might marry the twin sister of Abel, and Abel the twin sister of Cain. Whether this institution alters, and softens the case any more than that of the Lacedæmonians, who were permitted to marry their sisters on the mother's side, but not on the father's; or than that of the Athenians, who might by law, or who did by custom, marry their sisters on the father's side, but not on the mother's, as we find by the example of Abraham and Sarah, it was reputed lawful to do in the days of the patriarchs, let the great casuists of law and Gospel decide. It may be said, on the other hand, that, if it be agreeable to the law of nature and of right reason, in many cases, to extend the bonds of society by a prohibition of marriages between persons too near akin, it is in many cases at least as agreeable to this law, to preserve possessions and wealth in the families to which they belong, and not to suffer them to be carried by any female caprice into others. Precautions to this effect have been taken by wise legislators; and that which Moses took is remarkable in all it's circumstances. He had made a law, on the application

plication of the daughters of Zelophehad, "whose "cause" he is said to have "brought before the "Lord *", by which if a man died and had no son, his inheritance was to "pass unto his daugh- "ter †. But when the chief fathers of the families of the sons of Joseph came before Moses and the elders of Israel, to complain of this law, the precaution we speak of here was immediately added, and the law amended. Moses declared in the name of God, that "every daughter "who possessed an inheritance" by virtue of the former law, should be obliged to marry one of the family of the tribe of her father, and no other: and the reason is annexed, "that the children of "Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of "his fathers." In obedience to this law, the daughters of Zelophehad "were married unto "their father's brother's sons."

It is evident on the whole, that marriages, within certain degrees of consanguinity and affinity, are forbid by political institutions, and for political reasons; but are left indifferent by the law of nature, which determines nothing expressly about them. The laws of nature are general; and in this case, as in all others, the particular application of them, and the means of securing their effect, are left to human prudence. "In- "crease and multiply" is the law of nature. The manner in which this precept shall be executed with greatest advantage to society is the law of

* Num. c. 27. † Ibid. c. 36.

man. When the latter promotes the execution of the former, without breaking any other general law of nature, it is conformable to this law. This may be done, and has been done, by different institutions of marriage. Which of these is the most effectual relatively to the precept of increasing and multiplying, and at the same time consistent with the whole tenour of natural law, reason and experience must decide. In the mean time, we may venture to assert, that the most effectual to this purpose, under this condition, whichever it be, is the most conformable to nature, though it be not a law of nature. To marry among our kindred, or to marry strangers, is equally effectual to the propagation of the species, although polygamy and monogamy may not be so: and therefore since there are political reasons for and against the marriages referred to, the prohibition of either is merely arbitrary. It may be expedient on some occasions; but however the prohibition turns, it is a law of will, that forbids what the law of nature permits. As occasions are various, circumstances different, and will above all uncertain, so have these restraints on marriage been very inconsistently laid. In some places or times, it was unlawful to marry a sister by the father's, and in others by the mother's side; or it was lawful to marry a cousin-german, and not an aunt, as among the Jews by their Mosaical law. But the most ridiculous of all these inconsistencies is to be found in that great repertory of inconsistencies and absurdities, the rabbinical

rabbinical system of religion and law. When a gentile became a "proselyte of justice *," he became, according to this system, a new man, and lost all his former relations by this regeneration. He could not be affected, therefore, by the law that forbid the marriage of a mother, a daughter, or a sister, for he had none; and yet the prohibition was extended to him by the blundering casuistry of the rabbins, as it may seem, even when these relations were doubly dissolved, and the mother, the daughter, or the sister was a proselyte of justice, as well as himself.

XX.

AFTER saying thus much of ecclesiastical and and civil laws, that forbid what the laws of nature permit, something must be said of those which permit or enjoin what the laws of nature forbid, such things as are in direct opposition not only to reasonable nature, but to physical instinct. Sodomy was permitted among several nations, and if we dare not say that the moral Socrates practised it, we may say, that the divine Plato recommended it, in some of his juvenile verses at least: and yet sodomy is very inconsistent with the intention of nature, which can be carried on by the conjunction of the two sexes only. Of bestiality I say nothing, because I do not remember any proof that

* Seld. de Jure, &c. l. 5.

it was used by any people except the Israelites, who must have been very prone to this unnatural crime, since so great severity of law was necessary to restrain them from it. Castration and celibacy may be cited on this occasion. They are both contradictions to the law of nature; the first wantonly permitted, the second deceitfully and ambitiously commanded. The first makes obedience to the law impracticable, for two the most silly purposes imaginable, to provide guards for the seraglios of the east, and singers for the theatres of the west. The second came into fashion early in the christian church, to speak of no other, under the pretence of greater purity, and was pleaded for and practised by orthodox enthusiasts, as well as by hereticks. But when the church, with the bishop of Rome at the head of it, made a bold and successful push to be every where superior to the state, the celibacy of priests became a coercive law. Gregory the Seventh made the whole clergy submit to it, and the council of Trent maintained it strenuously, for the same reason of ecclesiastical ambition, that the religious society might be every where more independent on the civil, and less attached, by the ties of nature as well as of law, to the state.

There are other examples of the same kind, which cannot be brought without the utmost horror; because in them it is supposed impiously, against principles as self-evident as any of those necessary truths which are such of all knowledge, that

that the Supreme Being commands by one law what he forbids by another. The zealots among the Jews assumed a right to assassinate any Jew, or any other man, who should seem to them to violate by publick and strong appearances ..... "speciebus aliquot facti atrocioribus*," the sanctity of the Divinity, of the temple, or of the nation†. Thus Mattathias‡, in the fury of his holy zeal, rushed on the Jew who was about to sacrifice in obedience to the edict of Antiochus §, and on the officer appointed to take care of the execution of the edict, and murdered them both. In this case the appearances were not equivocal, most certainly. In many they might be so, and were so most probably very often, as in that for instance of a priest who was supposed to perform his office without a due purification ‖, and who might be dragged out of the temple on this presumption by the young priests: too young to be employed in any other sacerdotal function, but to whom it was lawful to dash out his brains with their clubs. In all cases it was against the very essence, as well as forms of justice, to trust in any hands a power, which none but enthusiasts would exercise. This strange power, however, was founded on their traditional or oral law; and the example of Phineas, who murdered Zimri and Cozbi in the act of fornication ¶, and the appro-

* Seld. de Jure &c. l. iv, c. 4.
† Sanctitatem sive numinis, sive templi, sive gentis.
‡ Ibid. § Maccab. Joseph.
‖ .... in immunditie sua. ¶ Num. c. 25.

bation which God is said to have given to this action, were brought to authorise the zealots in a practice, which produced such scenes of horrour among the Jews, even while they were besieged by a common enemy, as no other nation ever exhibited: such scenes as lions and tigers, provoked by hunger, and let loose together, would hardly have afforded.

If we take for granted all that we find related, and as it stands related, in the books of the Old Testament: we must believe, that the all-perfect Being approved, and commanded on many particular occasions, the most abominable violations of the general laws of nature, which were his own at least, as certainly as any of those that could be given by immediate revelation, and more certainly than any of those which were assumed on the authority of Moses, or on any authority afterward to be so given. Now this we cannot believe as theists; nor are we, I think, under any obligation of believing it as Jews, and much less as Christians. As theists, we cannot believe the all-perfect Being liable to one of the greatest of human imperfections, liable to contradict himself. Nothing is more conformable to our idea of such a being, than to believe that human reason cannot account for the proceedings of Infinite Wisdom in a multitude of instances, in many of those perhaps which seem the most obvious to it. But nothing is, at the same time, more inconsistent with this idea than to believe, that this Being perplexes his laws with apparent contradictions, or deviates

deviates from them like human legislators, in the particular applications of them; and that God, who never acts against the perfections of his own nature, commands his creatures to act upon any occasion against the perfection of theirs. If we try the whole system of the religion and policy of the Jews by this rule, I apprehend, that all the sophism which has been, or can be employed, with the help of begging the question throughout, will not be sufficient to acquit this system in many cases at the tribunal of informed and unprejudiced reason. The theist, as a theist, can never admit that laws, which are inconsistent with that reason, and process of reasoning by which he discovers, and can alone discover the existence and the will, relatively to man, of an all-perfect, Being, were given at any time or to any people by this Being. He will never give up one for the sake of the other, nor renounce demonstration in the highest degree for probability in the highest, and much less in the lowest. All such laws, therefore, as are manifest violations of the laws of his nature, will be ascribed by him to man, not to God.

A large field of particulars opens itself. Let us confine ourselves to that on which we have touched already. One law of nature forbids murder, as well as one law of the decalogue. Another allows it, as far as it is necessary to self-defence, and to the preservation of society, that is, to the maintenance of the whole system of natural law. It will not be pretended, I suppose, that these two laws contradict one another. They coincide

coincide in the same plan. The general and the particular law tend to the same purpose; they show the wisdom of the legislator by their consistency, and his goodness by their universality. It cannot be pretended with any appearance of truth, I am sure, that the same may be said of the Mosaical laws about murder. The whole system of the law of Moses, like the whole system of his conduct, was founded on murder, and the exceptions which he made, by particular laws in favour of it, to the general law against it, were so numerous, as to make this in great measure vain; which may be thought, without absurdity, not to be one mark of his divine legation. The thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy might find it's place here; and many singular reflections might be made, concerning the precautions taken against false prophets, whose seductions could be of little force in opposition to a true prophet; and against the dreamers of dreams, that could have little force in opposition to daily and almost hourly miracles, wrought in the sight of all Israel. Others might be made on certain precepts, from which I suppose, candidly, that the inquisition established in your church has copied the instructions she gives to her familiars; and others again on a spirit of cruelty, that involves the innocent with the guilty, spares neither man, woman, nor beast, neither the brother, the son, the daughter, the wife, nor the friend, but makes of the whole chapter such an edict as could not be imputed to Attila, without doing injustice to the uncircumcised

cised as well as unchristian king of the Huns. Such observations, I say, might be made, and be pushed to conviction; to inward conviction I mean, for there are those that will not own it when they feel it, but have recourse rather to trifling distinctions and dogmatical affirmation, the last entrenchments of obstinacy. In these let us leave them. Let it avail as much as it can avail, to say, that the laws referred to, and written in blood, like those of Draco, were given to the Israelites alone; that the Israelites were God's people exclusively of all others; that he was their king by a particular covenant, as well as their God; that idolatry was in every Israelite a breach of this covenant, an act of high treason, a political crime, and fit to be punished as such; in a word, that on all these accounts God might give them such laws in the former relation, as he could not have given to them, nor to any other people, in the latter alone, without contradicting, and obliging those who obeyed them to contradict, the general law of nature, whereof he was the Author, and by which the punishment of individuals, "in terrorem," according to their several degrees of guilt, not the undistinguishing extermination of collective bodies, and especially for matters of opinion, is allowed. I have met with arguments of this sort employed to justify the Mosaical law. They will not be admitted by some, perhaps, because Moses made use of the same cruel, and undiscerning jurisprudence, on account of their idolatry, against the Canaanites, who had no such covenant

covenant with God, nor were the subjects of such theocracy; who were obnoxious to divine vengeance in no other respect than that which was common to them and all the heathen nations; and who had provoked the Israelites by no other injury than that of self-defence; that these laws were therefore in the mouth of Moses, and in the understanding of all the people, the laws of God, as God, and not merely as king. But whatever be determined, the example is to my purpose. He who can persuade himself, that God, as king of a particular people, whom, as God, he had separated from the rest of mankind, gave these laws to the Israelites, must still confess, that these laws are repugnant to those of nature, which will leave the difficulty much where he found it. He, who instead of resting on this distinction, confounds the king and the God together, as Moses and the Israelites certainly did, is reduced to the necessity of owning what no sincere and consistent theist can own, that the Supreme Being contradicted his own laws in this instance. A sincere and consistent theist, then, must *look* on the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, as an example of human laws, that command what the laws of nature forbid.

That neither the Jew, nor the Christian, is under any obligation to look on it otherwise, may be collected from hence. The Sadducees rejected the whole oral law, and all the traditions of the Pharisees; they rejected too, most probably, the whole written law, except the five books ascribed

to

to Moses, though this has been controverted; they denied the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and a state of future rewards and punishments, which they esteemed to be doctrines invented or adopted by the Pharisees, and which we may believe, on very good grounds, to have been introduced into the Jewish church at different times, as well as from different churches, wherein we know that they were taught, since there are no evident traces of these, but rather of the contrary opinions, in the Mosaical system of religion. The Sadducees, therefore, opposed on all these points, not only the Pharisees first, but the doctrine of Christ, to whom few of them were converted afterward. The Sadducees, however, continued members of the Jewish church, and sacrificed at Jerusalem, while the Samaritans were driven out, or drove themselves out, and sacrificed on the mountain of Gerizaim: neither do we find that the former were so obnoxious to the censure of Christ, as the Pharisees. But the Pharisees were still the orthodox, that is, the sect in fashion; and how much they multiplied the observances of the law by their interpretations of it is enough known in general by every one. Now it seems very plain, that a Jew, whether Sadducee or Pharisee, might have softened by different methods, agreeably to the principles of his sect, the abominable violations of the natural by the Mosaical law. This too, one may believe, would have been done, if the cruel spirit of their law had not made them a nation of enthusiasts;

and

and if long habits had not made the spilling of blood more familiar to them than to most other people. The Sadducees were famous for their strict attachment to the rules of justice; and some are of opinion, that they took their name from a Hebrew word, signifying justice, rather than from Sadoc the disciple of Antigonus Sochæus. Surely then a Jew, in the character of a Sadducee, might reject out of the Pentateuch, with a due regard to natural justice, those unnatural, unjust, and bloody institutions, as reasonably, and as reconcilably with his Judaism, as he rejected the whole oral law in opposition to the Pharisees, and all the other books of their Scriptures, in conformity to the Samaritans. A Jew, in the character of a Pharisee, might have reconciled, with still greater ease, the law of Moses to the law of nature, that is, the assumed law of God to the real. A third law, the oral, might have brought this about, and this would have been the very best use to which it was ever put. When I say this might have been done with still greater ease by interpretation than by retrenchment, I do not speak without sufficient grounds; since I may undertake to show, from Selden, Basnage, and other authors, who deal in the Talmud, and in talmudical writings of rabbins, which they render intelligible even to me, that it would cost less improbability of tradition, and less subtilty of sophism in commenting, than many other opinions did, which these men had the credit to establish. The latitude of interpretation according to various

ous senses, and the authority of a cabala, were certain expedients, by which the imputation might have been taken from the Supreme Being, or the severity and injustice have been softened and excused in Moses. Nothing of this kind having been done, I conclude once more, that this chapter of Deuteronomy stands, and must stand, an example of human laws, that command what the laws of nature forbid.

Little more consideration will be necessary to discover, that a christian, who professes a religion promulgated by God himself, and in every point conformable to the law of nature, is obliged to deny any precept which is repugnant to this law to come from God, let it come on what authority, or be assumed on what pretence soever. The proceedings of Providence are represented, on one occasion particularly, by St. Paul, to be merely arbitrary, and the presumption of those, who should inquire into the reason of them, is very prudently reproved before hand. How just the representation, or the reproof is, may be questioned, as the first of them has been, and as they both may be the more reasonably, because these proceedings relate to God's dealings with men; for the justice of which, we are told by divines, that he appeals even to men. But this apostle himself does not, I think, prescribe any thing directly opposite to the law of nature, as the command of God to man; though his writings abound with mysterious refinements, that savour strongly of the pharisaical school, and with the mirabilia

mirabilia and inopinata of the Portick, a school not unknown to the former.

In all cases, and however this may be, the Gospel of Christ is one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and of universal charity. He could have called for fire down from Heaven, or for an army of destroying angels, to terrify those who did not believe, or to exterminate such as fell from the faith. But he breathed quite another spirit; and his instructions to his apostles went no further than to preach, to exhort, to reprove; and, where they could not prevail to have their doctrine received, to shake off the dust of their feet. In cases of the most enormous crimes, and even of apostacy, the apostles exercised no other power than that of separating such sinners from the communion of the faithful. If it should be urged, that they could exercise no other, because they were not the chief magistrates, nor legislators in any civil society, as Moses was, and therefore that no argument ought to be drawn from what they did not do, to condemn what Moses did and commanded, it would be urged in vain. They healed the lame, they cured the blind, and even raised the dead, to prove their mission. Moses proved his mission by miracles likewise. But the miracles wrought by them, in the mild and beneficent spirit of christianity, tended to the good of mankind; whereas the miracles he wrought, in the fierce and cruel spirit of Judaism, tended to the destruction of mankind. In this

this case, therefore, the difference was great; but in the other, in that of keeping the Jews attached to their religion, and the Christians to theirs, the difference was total. Moses exercised, and commanded the exercise of a political power, the most tyrannical, the most contrary to the laws of nature, and the most irreconcilable to every sentiment of humanity, for this purpose. The apostles, who might have exercised, for the same purpose, a divine, and much greater power, exercised no other than that which has been mentioned, which was not cruel, most certainly, and can be scarce called coercive, in the course of their ministry, how much occasion soever heresy, apostacy, and other flagrant crimes in the churches they had planted, gave them for it. Elymas, indeed, was struck blind by St. Paul, and Ananias and Saphira fell dead at the feet of St. Peter. But these were particular and extraordinary interpositions of Providence. Christ gave no instruction for the exercise of such judgments in any case. He had reproved this kind of spirit in in his disciples, when he was among them, and as long as his spirit remained in his church, the Mosaical spirit, as opposite to his law, as to the law of nature, could not arise. When they, who called themselves the successors of his apostles, hearkened to the suggestions of their passions, and called them zeal; that is, when political rather than religious motives guided them, they imitated Moses, outdo him they could not; and beside persecuting to convert, they not only promoted the utmost severity of punishment against those

who fell back into idolatry or Judaism, or who embraced any heresy; but, like Moses, they pretended to do all this by the command of God: so that the church of Christ imitated, in this instance, as it did in many more when it was fallen into corruption, and not before, such institutions as the church and state of the Jews adopted in the primitive purity, such as that purity was, of their original establishment.

Upon the whole matter, a christian, who takes his religion from the Gospel, and not from systems of theology, far from being under any obligation of believing, is under the strongest of rejecting every law, whether perpetual or occasional, whether given to the Jews alone or to them and to others, that is evidently repugnant to the law of nature and of right reason, to the precepts of the Gospel, to the example of Christ, to the practice of his first disciples, and to the genuine spirit of the religion they taught. If this was the Spirit of God in the days of Christ, it was the Spirit of God in the days of Moses: and whatever difference there might be in the several dispensations, and the objects of them, God could have effected his purposes without contradicting his Spirit. We may believe any thing sooner than this, that immutability admits of change; and yet we must admit both the contradiction and the change, if we give credit to all that we find related, and as it stands related, in the books of the Old Testament.

END OF THE SEVENTH VOLUME.

E. Blackader, Printer, Took's Court, Chancery Lane.

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